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"It Leaped out into the Midst of the Flames"

To illustrate "The Waters of Death," by Erckmann-Chatrian

THE LOCK AND KEY LIBRARY

THE MOST INTERESTING STORIES OF ALL NATIONS

Edited by
Julian Hawthorne

CLASSIC FRENCH

Charles Nodier
Honoré de Balzac François De Voltaire
Alexandre Dumas

NEW YORK
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Table of Contents

CHARLES NODIER (1780-1844) PAGE

Ines de Las Sierras 5

HONORÉ DE BALZAC (1799-1850)

An Episode of the Terror 62
Madame Firmiani 80
Z. Marcas 102
Melmoth Reconciled 130
The Conscript 181

FRANÇOIS MARIE AROUET DE VOLTAIRE (1694-1778)

Zadig the Babylonian
The Blind of One Eye 201
The Nose 204
The Dog and the Horse 206
The Envious Man 210
The Generous 214
The Minister 217
The Dispute and the Audiences 218
Jealousy 220
The Woman Beaten 225
The Stone 227
The Funeral Pile 228
The Supper 231
The Robber 232
The Fisherman 236
The Combats 245
The Hermit 250
The Enigmas 256

ALEXANDRE DUMAS (1802-70)

D'Artagnan, Detective PAGE

The King 7
The Journey 26
How D'Artagnan Became Acquainted With a Poet Who Had Turned Printer for the Sake of Printing His Own Verses 32
D'Artagnan Continues His Investigations . . . 40
In Which the Reader, No Doubt, Will be as Astonished as D'Artagnan Was to Meet with an Old Acquaintance 49
Wherein the Ideas of D'Artagnan, at First Very Troubled, Begin to Clear up a Little 56
A Procession at Vannes 65
The Grandeur of the Bishop of Vannes 72
In Which Porthos Begins to be Sorry for Having Come with D'Artagnan 83
In Which D'Artagnan Makes All Speed, Porthos Snores, and Aramis Counsels 96

Charles Nodier

Ines de Las Sierras

"AND you," said Anastasia, "aren't you going to tell us a ghost story, too?"

"I'm the very one to do it," I replied, "for I have witnessed the strangest apparition since the days of Samuel; but it isn't a mere yarn. It's a true story."

"Good!" murmured the assistant public prosecutor, "there's still somebody who believes in apparitions."

"Perhaps you would have believed in this one as firmly as I if you had been in my place," I returned.

Eudoria drew his armchair up close to mine, and I began:

It was in the last days of 1812. I was then a captain of dragoons in garrison at Gironne, Department of Ter. My colonel saw fit to send me to Barcelona for new horses, where was to be held, the day after Christmas, a horse fair that was renowned throughout Catalonia, and to attach to me in this undertaking two lieutenants of the regiment, named Sergy and Boutraix, who were my particular friends. Let me say a few words in regard to them, for their characteristics are not wholly irrelevant to the rest of my story.

Sergy was one of those young officers just out of school who have certain aversions, not to say antipathies, which they have to overcome before they are well thought of by their comrades. He had triumphed over his in a short time. His face was prepossessing, his manner distinguished, his wit quick and brilliant, and his courage equal to anything. There was not an exercise in which he did not excel, not an art in which he did not have taste and discernment, although his delicate and nervous organization made

him most susceptible to the charm of music. An instrument responding to his skillful fingers, and especially a fine voice, filled him with an enthusiasm sometimes revealed by exclamations or tears. When it was a woman's voice, and this woman was pretty, his transports approached delirium. They often made me fear for his reason.

You may readily judge that Sergy's heart was very accessible to love, and, in fact, you would have rarely found him free from one of those passions on which a man's life seems to depend; but the fortunate exaltation of his sensibility was in itself a defense against excess. What his ardent soul required was another equally ardent, with which it could associate and mingle itself; and although he thought he saw it everywhere, he had not met with it till then.

So far, it had happened that the idol of an evening, shorn of the prestige which he had divined, was only a woman on the morrow, and the most passionate of lovers was also the most changeable. On those days of disillusionment when he fell from the full height of his ideals to the humiliating conviction of reality, he was wont to say that the unknown object of his vows and hopes did not inhabit the earth; but he still sought it, only to deceive himself again as he had done a thousand times.

Sergy's last error had been produced by a little singer, who was perfectly commonplace, attached to the troupe of Bascara, which had just left Gironne. For two whole days the virtuoso had occupied the highest regions of Olympus. Two days had sufficed to reduce her to the level of ordinary mortals. Sergy no longer thought of her.

With this susceptibility of feeling, it was impossible that Sergy should not have considerable leaning toward the marvelous. There was no direction in which his ideas took flight more readily. A spiritualist by reasoning or education, he was much more so by imagination or instinct. His faith in the imaginary mistress which the spirit world had reserved for him was not merely a chance fancy; it was the favorite subject of his reveries, the secret romance

of his thoughts, a gracious and consoling kind of enigma which made amends for the troublesome recurrence of his useless efforts. Far from revolting against this chimera, I employed it more than once when chance brought it into the conversation, and with some success in combating his amorous despair. Generally speaking, it is well enough accepted that happiness may take refuge in an ideal life, when one knows what it amounts to in this.

Boutraix offered a perfect contrast to Sergy. He was a great big fellow, as full of loyalty, honor, courage, devotion to his comrades; but his face was quite ordinary, and his wits resembled his face: he only knew by hearsay this moral love of the head and heart which troubles or embellishes life, and he regarded it as an invention of the novelists and poets, never existing outside of books. As for the love which he could understand, he made some use of it on occasion, but without giving it more care or thought than it was worth. His sweetest leisure was at the table, where he was the first to be seated, and the last to leave, provided the wine didn't give out.

After a fine deed in war, wine was the sole thing in the world which inspired him with any enthusiasm. He spoke of it with a sort of eloquence, and he drank of it largely without carrying his indulgence to drunkenness. By a particular favor of his temperament, he had never fallen into that gross state in which man approaches the beast; but it must be conceded that he fell asleep very opportunely.

The intellectual life was confined for Boutraix to a very small number of ideas upon which he had formed invariable principles, capable of expression in absolute formulas, very convenient for avoiding the discussion of them. The difficulty of proving anything by a course of sound reasoning had determined him to deny everything.

To all deductions based on faith or feeling, he replied by two sacramental words: *fanaticism* and *prejudice*. If one were obstinate, he leaned his head on the back of his chair and gave sound to a sharp whistle which lasted as

long as the objection and spared him the inconvenience of listening to it. Although he had never read two consecutive pages, he believed that he had read Voltaire, and even Piron, whom he regarded as a philosopher: these two fine spirits were his supreme authorities; and the *ultima ratio* in every controversy in which he deigned to take part could be summed up in this triumphant phrase: "Besides, see what Voltaire and Piron say!" The altercation usually ended there, and he carried off the palm, which gave him, in his own opinion, the reputation of a great logician.

For all that, Boutraix was a good comrade, and, indisputably, the best judge of horseflesh in the army.

As we proposed to get remounts for ourselves, we decided, in going to Barcelona, to engage the services of one of the *arrieros*, or carriage drivers, who abound in Gironne; and the facility of finding them had inspired us with a confidence which proved to be mistaken. The feast of the evening of the 24th, and the sale on the second day following, attracted, from all parts of Catalonia, an innumerable quantity of travelers, and we had waited until precisely that day before procuring the necessary vehicle. At eleven o'clock in the morning we were still looking for an *arriero*, and there remained only a single one from whom we could expect anything, when we found him at his door ready to leave.

"Maledictions on your carry-all and your mules!" cried Boutraix, seized with wrath, and seating himself on a fence. "May all the devils in hell be let loose on your journey, and Lucifer himself serve your supper. So you won't take us?"

The *arriero* crossed himself and recoiled a step.

"Heaven keep you in its holy care, Master Estevan," I put in, smiling; "have you any travelers?"

"I can't say positively that I have travelers," answered the driver, "because I have only one, Señor Bascara, manager and leading actor of the theatrical company, who is going to rejoin his troupe in Barcelona, and who has remained behind to take care of the baggage, that is to say,

this trunk full of duds and trinkets, which can't be packed on a mule."

"So much the better, Master Estevan! Your carriage has four places, and Señor Bascara will be willing to let us pay three-fourths of the expenses, which will allow him to charge up the whole bill to his employer. We will keep the secret. Take the trouble to ask him if he won't give us leave to accompany him."

Bascara hesitated only long enough to give his consent the appearance of an obliging concession. At noon we had started from Gironne.

The morning had been as fine as one could desire at that season; but scarcely had we passed the last houses of the town, than the white vapors, which had floated since sunrise above the mountains in soft light draperies, developed with surprising rapidity, embraced the whole horizon, and hedged us about like a wall. Soon they dissolved in rain mixed with snow, extremely fine, but so thick and driving that one would have thought the atmosphere filled with water, or that our mules had entered a river which was fortunately permeable to respiration.

The equivocal element which surrounded us had lost its transparency to such a degree as to hide from us the hedges and nearest landmarks of the road; our guide himself could only reassure himself that he was following it by sounding from time to time with his feet as well as sight, before trusting his equipage to advance, and his trials, often repeated, retarded our progress more and more. The smallest gullies had become so large in a few hours as to be perilous, and Bascara never crossed one without recommending himself to Saint Nicholas or Saint Ignatius, the patrons of navigators.

"I am really afraid," said Sergy, smiling, "that the heavens have taken Boutraix at his word for the terrible imprecation he addressed to the *arriero* this morning. All the devils of the Inferno seem to have beset us on our journey, just as he wished, and there is nothing wanting but to have the devil in person sup with us to have his presage

fulfilled. It is a nuisance, you'll agree, to have to suffer the consequences of his impious wrath."

"Good, good!" replied Boutraix, half waking up. "Prejudice! superstition! fanaticism!"

And he went to sleep again immediately.

The route became a little more reliable when we had reached the rocky and solid shore of the sea; but the rain, or rather the deluge through which we navigated with such difficulty, was not in the least diminished. It did not seem to let up until three hours after sunset, and we were still very far from Barcelona. We had arrived at Mattaro, where we resolved to spend the night, in the impossibility of doing better, for our team was overcome by fatigue; we had scarcely turned to drive into the broad entrance of the inn, however, than the *arriero* opened the carriage door, and announced sadly that the courtyard was already so filled with conveyances that it was impossible to make an entrance among them.

"Some fatality," he added, "is pursuing us on this journey of misfortune. There isn't any lodging vacant except at the Castle of Ghismondo."

"Let's see," I said, jumping out of the carriage, "if we must make up our minds to camp out in one of the most hospitable cities of Spain, that would be a harsh extremity after so tiresome a journey."

"Mr. Officer," replied a muleteer, who was leaning indolently against the gatepost, smoking a cigarette, "you don't lack companions in disgrace, for everybody in the last two hours has been refused accommodation at all the inns and houses where the first comers have sheltered themselves. There is no lodging vacant except at the Castle of Ghismondo."

I had long been familiar with this manner of talking, customary with the people on like occasions; but its fastidious recurrence had never importuned my ear more disagreeably.

I made my way to the presence of the hostess, through a tumultuous mob of travelers, *arrieros,* mules, and grooms,

and, attracting attention by pounding on a copper utensil with the hilt of my sword, in the imperious tone which usually succeeds, cried:

"A stable, a chamber, a well served table, and that at once! It's for the service of the emperor!"

"Ah, Mr. Captain," replied she with assurance, "the emperor himself couldn't find a place to sit down in my whole establishment. Victuals and wine a-plenty you may have, if you care to sup in the open air, for, thank Heaven, it isn't difficult to provide yourself with them in a town like this; but it isn't in my power to stretch the house to receive you. On my faith as a Christian, there isn't a vacant lodging except at the Castle . . ."

"Pest take the proverbs and the country of Sancho!" I interrupted brusquely. "Yet grant that this cursed castle really exists somewhere, for I would rather pass the night there than in the street."

"Is it only that?" she replied, regarding me fixedly. "It's in reality that you make me recall it! The Castle of Ghismondo is not more than three-quarters of a mile from here, and, one, indeed, always finds lodgings vacant there. It is true that folk profit little by this opportunity, but you Frenchmen aren't the men to give place to a demon. So, if it suits you, your carriage will be filled with everything necessary to your passing the night comfortably, provided you don't receive a troublesome visit."

"We are too well armed to care for anyone," I replied, "and as for the Devil himself, I have heard him spoken of as being an agreeable boon companion. Prepare our provisions, good mother. Rations for five, each of whom eats like four, forage for our mules, and a little too much wine, if you please, for Boutraix is with us."

"Lieutenant Boutraix!" she cried, joining her outstretched hands, which, as everyone knows, is an exclamation in gesture: "*Mozo,* two baskets of twelve, and real *rancio!*"

Ten minutes later the interior of the coach was transformed into a well-stocked house, and so copiously fur-

nished that one couldn't introduce our most insistent traveler into it; but the weather, which, as I have said, had not ceased to be menacing, seemed for the moment to be somewhat appeased. We did not hesitate to take the road on foot.

"Where are we going, Captain?" asked the *arriero,* surprised at our preparations:

"Where should we be going, my poor Estevan, if it were not to the place which you have indicated yourself? To the Castle of Ghismondo, probably."

"To the Castle of Ghismondo! May the Holy Virgin take pity on us! Even my mules wouldn't dare to go there!"

"They'll do it all the same," I replied, slipping a pinch of small change into his hand, "and amends shall be made to them for the extra fatigue by an abundant repast. For you, my good fellow, there are three bottles of old Palamos wine which you can tell me how you like. Only let's not lose any time, for we are all of us nearly famished, and besides, the sky is beginning to get terribly disturbed."

"To the Castle of Ghismondo," Bascara repeated lamentably. "Do you know, gentlemen, what the Castle of Ghismondo is? No one has ever entered it with impunity without having first made a pact with the spirit of evil and I would not set foot in it for the command of galleons. No, truly I shall not go there!"

"You shall go, upon my honor, my worthy Bascara," replied Boutraix, encircling him with a vigorous arm. "Is it for a noble Castilian, who practices a liberal profession with glory, to recoil before the most inept of popular prejudices? Ah, if Voltaire and Piron had been translated into Spanish, as they ought to be in every language in the world, I should not be put to the trouble of proving to you that the Devil is an old woman's humbug, invented for the profit of monks by some naughty drinker of *eau de théologien;* but I shall make you put your finger on that when we have had supper, for my stomach is too empty, and my mouth too dry, to sustain a philosophical discussion advan-

tageously at the present moment. Come on, brave Bascara, and be assured that you will always find Lieutenant Boutraix between the Devil and yourself, if he were so bold as to offer you the least offense. Odds bods! It would be fine to see him!"

We had set out, while talking thus, upon the miry and rutted road up the hill, to the accompaniment of many a sobbed "alas!" from Bascara, who marked each of his steps with effusions of psalms or an invocation of litanies. I must admit that the mules themselves, worn by overwork and hunger, approached the end of our nocturnal exploit with cross and sullen mien, stopping from time to time, as if they had heard a salutary countermand, and turning their lowered heads piteously at every rod of the road which they covered.

"What is this castle of fatal renown, then," asked Sergy, "which inspires these good people with such a sincere and profound terror? A rendezvous of ghosts, perhaps?"

"And perhaps," I replied in a low tone, "a place where robbers repair; for the people never conceive a superstition of this nature which is not founded on some legitimate motive of fear. But among the three of us we have three swords, three pairs of excellent pistols, ammunition for reloading; and, besides his hunting knife, the *arriero* is certainly provided, according to custom, with a good Valentian blade."

"Who is there who doesn't know what the Castle of Ghismondo is?" murmured Estevan, in a voice that was already moved. "If these illustrious gentlemen are curious to learn it, I am in a position to satisfy them, for my late father entered it. He was brave enough for you, that man! God pardon him for having been a little too fond of drink!"

"There's no harm in that," interrupted Boutraix. "What the deuce did your father see at the Castle of Ghismondo, then?"

"Tell us the story," said Sergy, who would have re-

nounced the most refined pleasure party for a fantastic tale.

"Inasmuch as after I've done so," replied the muleteer, "their lordships will be free to return, if they think best." And he continued:

"This unfortunate Ghismondo," said he, and immediately interrupted himself as if fearing to be overheard by some invisible witness—"unfortunate indeed," he pursued, "for having brought down upon himself the inexorable wrath of God, for I do not wish him harm on any other account! Ghismondo, at the age of twenty-five years, was the head of the illustrious family of Las Sierras, so renowned in our chronicles. That was three hundred years ago, or thereabouts; but the exact year is mentioned in books. He was a handsome and brave cavalier, liberal, gracious, welcomed by all for a long time, but too much inclined to keep bad company, and one who did not know how to preserve himself in the fear and respect of the Lord, so that he started evil rumors by his behavior, and almost completely ruined himself by his prodigality.

"It was then that he was obliged to find an asylum in the castle where you have resolved so imprudently, with all respect, to pass the coming night, and which was the sole remnant of his rich patrimony. Glad to escape in this retreat from the pursuit of his creditors and numerous enemies, since his passions and debauches had brought trouble to many families, he ended by fortifying it, and confined himself there for the rest of his days, with an equerry whose life had been equally bad, and a young page, the corruption of whose soul was far in advance of his years; their household consisted merely of a handful of men-at-arms, who had taken part in their excesses and whose single resource was to share their fortune. The object of one of Ghismondo's first expeditions was to procure himself a companion, and, like the ill bird which fouls its own nest, he selected a victim from his own family. There were those who said, however, that Ines de Las Sierras, such was the name of his niece, secretly favored her own carry-

ing off. Who will ever be able to explain the mysteries of women's hearts?

"I have said that this was his first expedition, because history attributes to him many others. The revenues connected with this stronghold, which seems to have been stricken for all time with the curse of Heaven, would not have been sufficient for his expenditures if he had not supplemented them by levying imposts on travelers, a matter qualified as highway robbery when not done by noble lords. The name of Ghismondo and his castle in a short time became redoubtable."

"Is that all?" said Boutraix. "What you have recounted was common everywhere. It was one of the necessary results of feudalism, following barbarism, in those centuries of ignorance and slavery."

"What remains for me to tell you is a little less commonplace," replied the *arriero*. "The sweet Ines, who had had a Christian education, was enlightened by a brilliant ray of grace. At the instant when the hour of midnight had recalled to the faithful the birth of the Saviour, according to her custom, she entered the banquet hall where the three brigands, seated before the hearth, were drowning their crimes in the excess of an orgy. They were half drunk. Inspired by faith, she painted their wickedness in vivid words, as well as the eternal punishments which were to follow; she wept, she prayed, she knelt before Ghismondo, and, with her white hand placed on the heart which scarcely beat for love of her any more, she tried to recall to it some human sentiments. It was an undertaking, gentlemen, far beyond her powers, and Ghismondo, excited by his barbarous companions, replied with a blow of his poniard which pierced her heart."

"The monster!" cried Sergy, as affected as if he had heard a true story told.

"This horrible incident," continued Estevan, "did not detract from the usual license and mirth. The three companions kept on drinking and singing impious songs, in the presence of the dead girl; and it was three o'clock in the

morning, when the men-at-arms, warned by the silence of their masters, entered the chamber of festivities to raise four bodies stretched out in pools of blood and wine. Unflinchingly they put the three drunkards in their beds, and the corpse in its shroud.

"But the vengeance of Heaven," pursued Estevan after a solemn pause, "but the infallible justice of God had not lost its effect. Hardly had sleep begun to dissipate the vapors which obscured Ghismondo's reason, when he saw Ines enter his chamber with measured tread, not beautiful, trembling with love as formerly; but pale, covered with blood, trailing the long garment of the dead, and reaching towards him a flaming hand which, upon reaching him, she placed upon his bosom, at the same spot where she had ineffectually placed it a few hours before.

"Held by an invisible power, Ghismondo tried vainly to escape from the terrifying apparition. His efforts and distress were manifested only by confused and hollow groans. The implacable hand remained as if nailed in its place, and Ghismondo's heart burned, and it burned thus till sunrise when the phantom disappeared. His companions received the same visit and underwent the same torture.

"On the morrow, and on every following morrow during what seemed to be an almost eternal year, the three wretches met by daylight to interrogate each other with a glance concerning the dream which each had had, for they dared not speak of it; but community of peril and of gain drew them soon to new crimes; the license of night drew them into new orgies, more prolonged; and the hour of sleep was dreadful to them; and the hour of sleep come, the hand of the avenging woman always burned them.

"The anniversary of the 24th of December reached (that is to-day, gentlemen) and the evening repast reuniting them before the light of the blazing hearth, they heard the hour of the redemption struck at Mattaro, summoning Christians to its solemnities. Suddenly a voice was raised in the gallery of the castle: 'Here I am!' cried Ines.

"They saw her enter, cast aside her funeral cloth, and seat

herself among them in her richest attire. Seized with astonishment and terror, they saw her eat of the bread and drink of the wine of the living; they say, even that she sang and danced, following the custom of the past. But suddenly her hand burst into flame as in the mysteries of their dreams, and touched the heart of the chevalier, the equerry, and the page. Then all was done for with this fleeting life, for their calcined hearts had ended by being reduced to ashes, and no longer made the blood course through their veins.

"It was three o'clock in the morning when the men-at-arms, warned by the silence of their masters, entered, according to custom, the chamber of festivities; and that time they carried out four corpses. On the morrow nobody awoke."

Sergy had appeared to be profoundly preoccupied during this recital, because the ideas which it stimulated in his mind, were connected with the usual subjects of his reveries; Boutraix from time to time uttered an expressive sigh, but one which expressed scarcely anything but impatience and boredom; the comedian, Bascara, between his teeth, mumbled unintelligible words which seemed to accompany the *arriero's* lugubrious romance like a deep and melancholy monotone, and an oft repeated movement of his hand made me suspect that he was reviewing the beads of a rosary. As for myself, I admired these poetical fragments of tradition happening to be woven so naturally into the story of a simple man, and lending it colors which imagination enlightened by taste does not always disdain.

"That is not all," resumed Estevan, "and I beg for you to hear me a moment longer before persisting in your dangerous project. Since the death of Ghismondo and his kin, his detestable lair, become odious to all men, has fallen to the lot of the Devil. The very road by which one gets there has been abandoned, as you may see for yourselves. One knows only, beyond all doubt, that every year at midnight on the 24th of December (gentlemen, that is to-day, and will soon be the hour), the casements of the old edifice

are suddenly illuminated. Those who have dared to penetrate these terrible secrets know that then the chevalier, the equerry, and the page return from the abode of the dead to take their places at the bloody orgy. It is the doom to which they must submit to the end of the centuries. A little later Ines enters in her shroud, which she casts aside to appear in her customary toilet. Ines, who drinks, eats, and dances with them. When they have lulled themselves for some time in the delirium of their mad joy, imagining each time that she is never going to stop, the girl shows them her wound, still open, touches them on the heart with her flaming hand, and returns to the fires of Purgatory after having sent them to those of Hell!"

These last words drew from Boutraix a convulsive burst of laughter which took away his breath for the moment.

"The Devil take you!" he cried, striking the *arriero* on the shoulder with a heavy but friendly fist, "I have failed to be moved by these fables, which you tell well enough, however; and I felt as silly as a fool when 'Hell' and 'Purgatory' brought me to myself. Prejudices, Catalan! The prejudices of a child whom they terrify with masks! Old legends of superstition which no longer find credence anywhere but in Spain! You shall see presently whether fear of the Devil will prevent me from finding the wine good (and, parenthetically, that reminds me I'm thirsty). Hurry your mules, if you will; for, to see supper more promptly served, I shall propose a toast to Satan himself."

"Those were the very words of my father at a debauch at Mattaro with other soldiers like himself," said the *arriero*. "When they kept on clamoring for the vintage of Posada, the landlord replied, 'There isn't any more except at the Castle of Ghismondo.'"

"'Then I shall have some,' answered my father, who was as impious as a horse's jawbone; 'and by the Pope's whiskers, I'll have some if the Devil should pour it out himself! I'm going.'—'You sha'n't go! Oh, grant that you

don't!'—'I shall go,' he replied with a still more execrable blasphemy; and he was so obstinate as to do so."

"About your father," said Sergy, "have you forgotten Boutraix's question? What did he see that was so terrifying at the Castle of Ghismondo?"

"What I've told you, gentlemen. After having proceeded through a long gallery hung with ancient pictures, he stopped at the threshold of the banquet hall; and, as the door was open, he looked in boldly. The damned were at the table, and Ines was showing them her bleeding wound. Then she danced, and each of her steps brought her nearer to the place where he was standing. His heart was suddenly wrung at the thought that she was coming to take him. He fell full length like a dead body, and did not come to himself till the following day when he found himself at the door of the church of the parish."

"Where he had slept since evening," replied Boutraix, "because he had drunk so much wine he couldn't get any farther. A drunkard's dream, my poor Estevan! May the earth lie as lightly on him as he often found it shifting and dancing under his feet! But this infernal castle, sha'n't we ever get there?"

"We are there," replied the *arriero,* stopping his mules.

"It was time," said Sergy. "Now the torment is about to begin, and, strange occurrence for this season, I have heard several rumblings of thunder."

"One always hears it at this period, at the Castle of Ghismondo," replied the *arriero.*

He had not ceased speaking when a blinding flash rent the sky, and showed us the whitened walls of the old stronghold, with its turrets grouped like a troop of specters, on an immense platform formed by a single steep rock.

The main door seemed to have been closed for a long time, but the upper hinges had ended by giving way under the action of the air and the years, together with the stones that sustained them; and the two wings, fallen against each other, were rotted by the dampness and battered by the wind, overweighted, ready to fall upon the pavement. We

did not have any trouble about tumbling them down. In the space which they had left by separating toward their base, and where the body of a man could scarcely have gained entrance, was piled up débris from the vault and the arch which we had to clear away before us. The stout leaves of aloes, growing in the interstices, fell before our swords, and the carriage entered the vast entrance, the flagstones of which had not groaned under a passing wheel since the days of Ferdinand the Catholic.

Then we hastened to light some of the torches with which we had been supplied at Mattaro, the flame of which, fed by gushing streams, luckily resisted, being beaten out by the wings of nocturnal birds, which fled, uttering cries of lamentation, from every crevice of the old structure. This scene, which had indeed something extraordinary and sinister about it, recalled to me involuntarily the descent of Don Quixote into the Cavern of Montesinos; and the laughing observation which I made on it would probably have provoked a smile from the *arriero* or Bascara himself, if they had still been able to smile; but their consternation increased at every step.

The great court opened at last before us. On the left extended a long shed, destined formerly to protect the châtelain's horses against the intemperance of the seasons, as several iron rings, placed at intervals along the wall, attested. We were rejoiced at the idea of accommodating our team so handily, and this thought seemed to cheer up even Estevan, who was concerned before everything with the well-being and rest of his mules. Two torches, firmly fixed in brackets, which seemed to have been prepared for them, cast a cheerful light in this shelter; and the forage, with which we had piled the back of the carriage, spread out splendidly before the beasts, harassed by hunger and exertion, gave it an air of gayety which it was a pleasure to see.

"That couldn't be better, gentlemen," said Estevan, somewhat reassured. "I admit that my mules can spend the night here; and there is a proverb which says: 'The mule-

teer is all right wherever he can put his mules.' If you will be good enough to let me have some victuals so that I can sup at their side, I think I can answer for it until to-morrow; for I fear the devils of the stable less than those of the salon. They are good enough fellows, with whom habit has made us familiar, us *arrieros,* and their malignity limits itself to ruffling the horses' hair, or currying them the wrong way. As for us, poor folk as we are, they content themselves with pinching us hard enough to make the mark last for a week, in the shape of a yellow spot which all the waters of the Ter would not wash away; with giving us cramps which turn the calf of the leg on the bone, or sitting heavily on our stomachs, laughing like idiots. I feel myself man enough to brave all that, making use of the grace of God and the three bottles of wine of Palamos the captain has promised me."

"They are there," I said, helping him unhitch the carriage, "and, besides, two loaves of bread and a quarter of roast mutton. Now that the cavalry and baggage train are lodged, we will go up in there and see about the rations for the infantry."

We lit four torches, and essayed the grand staircase, through the débris which obstructed it everywhere, Bascara, between Sergy and Boutraix, who encouraged him with voice and example, making fear cede to the vanity which is so powerful in a Spanish soul. I avow that this incursion, devoid of peril as it was, had, nevertheless, something adventurous and fantastic about it with which my imagination was secretly charmed, and I may add that it presented difficulties sufficient to excite our ardor. Parts of the walls had crumbled here and there, opposing to us, in twenty different places, accidental barricades which it was necessary to get around or surmount. Planks, rafters, whole beams, fallen from the upper parts of the timberwork, were crossed and involved on the broken steps. Their sharp splinters bristled under our feet. The old window sashes which had admitted the light of day to the vestibule and stairs, had long since fallen, wrenched out by

storms, and we recognized vestiges of them only by the cracking of broken panes under the soles of our shoes. An impetuous wind, laden with snow, whistled horribly as it entered through the space which they had abandoned in falling in an apartment, one or two centuries before; and the wild vegetation, the seeds of which had been cast here by the tempest, added still more to the entanglement of the passage and the horror of its aspect.

I thought, without saying so, that a soldier's heart would be borne up by a readier and more natural throb in attacking a redoubt or assaulting a fortress. We arrived at last at the stairhead of the second story, and recovered our breath for a moment.

At our left opened a long corridor, narrow and obscure, in which our torches, united at the entrance, could not dispel the darkness. Before us was the door of the apartments, or rather it was no longer there. This new invasion occasioned us only the trouble of walking in, torch in hand, into a square hall which must have served to accommodate the men-at-arms. We judged so, at least, from the two rows of broken benches which garnished it on each side, and from some common arms, gnawed half through by rust, which still hung as trophies on its walls. As we crossed it the truncheons of four or five lances, and the barrels of as many carbines, rolled under our feet. It issued by a turn at right angles into a gallery that was much more extensive in length, but of medium size, the right side was pierced by empty casement, like those of the staircase, where scarcely any fragments of the rotted frames still rattled.

The floor in this part of the building had become so decomposed by the influence of the atmosphere and the descent of rain, that it was abandoning all its mortises, and only extended towards the outer wall in a thin and rent fringe. In this direction one felt it give and rise with suspicious elasticity, and the foot sank in it as in a compact dust, threatening to give way. At intervals the less firm portions had begun to break through in odd openings, where the

tread of some inquisitive person, bolder than I, had imprudently tested it. I drew my companions brusquely toward the left-hand wall, where progress seemed less hazardous. The gallery was filled with paintings.

"As sure as there isn't any God, these are the pictures," said Boutraix. "Did the drunkard who spawned that sorry *arriero* come as far as this?"

"Oh, no!" replied Sergy, with a slightly bitter laugh. "He slept in the portico of the church at Mattaro, because the wine that he had drunk prevented him from getting any farther."

"I don't ask your opinion," returned Boutraix, directing his leer at the dusty and disjointed frames, which covered the wall at a multitude of capricious angles, but without finding a single one which did not depart more or less from the perpendicular. "These are really pictures, and portraits at that, if I am not mistaken. The whole family of Las Sierras has posed in this cutthroat place."

Such remains of the art of past centuries would have occupied our attention under other circumstances, but we were in too much haste to find a suitable lodging for our little caravan, to spend much time in the examination of these frustrated canvases which had all but disappeared under the black and humid stucco of the years. Meanwhile, having come to the last portraits, Sergy raised his flambeau, and seizing me tightly by the arm, said:

"Look, look! This chevalier with a somber air, whose forehead is cast in shadow by a red plume: this must be Ghismondo himself. See how marvellously the painter expressed the lassitude of excess and the caves of crime in a face still young. It's a sad thing to see!"

"The next portrait will make you amends," I replied, smiling at his hypothesis. "It is that of a woman, and if it were better preserved or nearer our eyes you would go into ecstasies over the charms of Ines de Las Sierras, for one might suppose, also, that it is she. What you may still distinguish in it is of a nature to produce a keen impression. What elegance in this slim waist! What piquant attrac-

tion in the attitude! What beauties of the whole which escape us are promised by this wonderfully modeled arm and hand! It is thus that Ines should be!"

"And it is thus that she was," answered Sergy, drawing me toward him, "for, from this point of view I have just caught her eyes. Oh! never has a more passionate expression spoken to the soul! Never has life come down more living from the brush! And if you will follow this indication in the flakes of the canvas to the sweet contour in which the cheek turns about this charming mouth, if you catch as I the movement of this disdainful lip, but where one feels that the intoxication of love breathes——"

"I should form an imperfect idea," I resumed coldly, "of what a pretty woman of the court of Charles the Fifth might have been."

"Of the court of Charles the Fifth," said Sergy, bending forward. "That is true."

"Wait, wait," said Boutraix, whose high stature enabled him to reach the Gothic scroll which decorated the lower stick of the frame, and over which he passed his handkerchief several times. "Here is a name, written either in German or Hebrew, if it isn't in Syriac or Low Breton; but the Devil take anyone who can read it. I would as soon explain the Koran."

Sergy uttered an enthusiastic cry.

"*Ines de Las Sierras!* Ines de Las Sierras!" he repeated, grasping my hands with a sort of frenzy. "Read it as quick as you can!"

"*Ines de Las Sierras!*" I replied; "that's it; and these three mountains *sinople** on a field of gold must be the arms of her family. It appears that this unfortunate really existed and that she inhabited this castle. But it's high time to seek an asylum here for ourselves. Are you not disposed to penetrate farther?"

"Come here, gentlemen, come here!" cried Boutraix, who had preceded us by a few steps. "Here is a salon

* A tincture in French heraldry, standing for green, or the same as *vert*.

for company which will not make us regret the wet streets of Mattaro; a lodging worthy of a prince, or of a military intendant! Lord Ghismondo liked his ease, and there is nothing to be said about the arrangement of the apartment. What a superb barrackroom!"

This immense apartment was indeed better preserved than the rest. The back only received the light, where it was admitted by two narrow windows, which, by their favorable arrangement, had been saved from the degradation common to the whole building. Its hangings of stamped leather and its huge antique armchairs had an air of magnificence which their age rendered still more imposing. The fireplace of colossal proportions, opening its vast flanks on the wall at the left, seemed to have been built for giants to sit up before of nights, and the demolished woodwork scattered in the staircase would have furnished a cheerful fire for hundreds of such nights as that which was about to slip away. A round table, at a distance of a few feet, recalled the impious festivities of Ghismondo, and I willingly admit that I did not perceive it without a slight shock.

It required several trips to supply us with the necessary wood, and afterwards our packages, which the day's flood of rain might have seriously impaired. All was found, happily, safe and sound, and even the trumpery of Bascara's company, spread out on the backs of the armchairs before the blazing hearth, shone before our eyes with the factitious luster and superannuated freshness which was lent them by the deceptive radiancy of the footlights. It is true that Ghismondo's dining hall, lit up by ten ardent torches, skillfully fixed in ten old candelabras, was certainly better illuminated than the theater of a small Catalonian town ever was in the memory of man. Only the farthest portion, that approaching the portrait gallery, by which we had entered, had not lost all its shadows. One would have said that they had been amassed there as if with the design of establishing a mysterious barrier between us and the profane vulgar. It was the visible night of the poet.

"I do not doubt," said I, while occupying myself, with my companions, in the preparations for a repast, "that this will furnish a new pretext for the credulity of the inhabitants of the plain. It is the hour at which Ghismondo returns every year to sit at his infernal banquet, and the light which these casements must shed outside announces nothing less than a feast of demons. Estevan's old legend may be founded on a like circumstance."

"Add to that," said Boutraix, "that the whim of representing this scene in a natural manner might have occurred to good-natured adventurers, and that it is not impossible that the *arriero's* father really assisted at a comedy of that kind."

"We are charmingly situated to recommence it," he continued, lifting up the property of the traveling troupe, piece by piece. "Here is the costume of a chevalier, which seems to have been cut for the captain; I might recall, trait for trait, the accursed one's intrepid equerry, who was, apparently, a very fine-looking chap; and this coquettish costume, which would relieve the somewhat languorous beauty of Sergy's physiognomy, would readily endow him with the air of the most seductive of pages. Admit that the invention is happy, and that it offers us a night of rattling good fun!"

As Boutraix was speaking he costumed himself from head to foot, and we imitated him laughingly, for there is nothing more contagious than an extravagance among young heads. Nevertheless, we took the precaution to keep our swords and pistols, which, considering the date of their manufacture, did not contrast in too shocking a manner with our disguisement. Even the heroes of Ghismondo's gallery, if they had suddenly descended from their Gothic frames, would not have found themselves greatly bewildered in their hereditary stronghold.

"And the beautiful Ines?" cried Boutraix. "Haven't you thought of her? Would Señor Bascara, whom nature has supplied with external gifts of which the Graces might be jealous, be so good as to undertake this *rôle* for

this single occasion, in response to the general public demand?"

"Gentlemen," replied Bascara, "I lend myself willingly to pleasantries that do not affect the safety of my soul, that is my profession; but this is of a kind which does not permit me to take part in it. You shall see, perhaps to your great harm, that one does not brave the infernal powers with impunity. Rejoice yourselves as it may seem fitting to you, since grace has not touched you; but I call on you to bear witness that I absolutely renounce these joys of Satan, and that I only ask to escape from here so that I may become a monk in some good house of the Lord. Grant me only as a brother, in the holy name of the Saviour, which shall be praised forever, permission to pass the night in this armchair, with some reflection to sustain my body, and liberty to pray."

"Hold," said Boutraix, "this magnificent orison merits a whole goose and two flagons. Keep your chair, friend; eat, drink, pray, and sleep. You shall never be anything but a fool!—Furthermore," he added, seating himself again and refilling his glass, "Ines doesn't come till dessert,—and I verily trust she'll come."

"God preserve us!" said Bascara.

I took my place in front of the fire, the equerry at my right, the page at my left. Opposite me, Ines's place remained empty. I cast a glance about the table, and, whether from preoccupation, or whether from lowness of spirits, I also found this diversion had something serious about it which oppressed my heart. Sergy, more susceptible than I to romantic impressions, seemed yet more moved. Boutraix drank.

"How does it happen," said Sergy, "that these solemn ideas, of which philosophy makes light, never entirely lose their empire over the strongest and clearest minds? Has man's nature a secret need of raising itself to the marvelous in order to enter into the possession of some privilege which has been taken from him, and which formed the noblest part of his essence?"

"On my honor," replied Boutraix, "I do not believe in this supposition, although you have announced it with sufficient clearness for me to understood what you mean. The effect of which you speak is due to the results of former habit in the cells of the brain, which have retained the foolish impressions that our mothers and nurses instilled in our infancy, like a kind of soft wax, hardened by time, as is admirably explained by Voltaire in a superb book which I recommend that you read when you have leisure. To think otherwise is to lower oneself to the level of this simple fellow who muttered a blessing over his food a quarter of an hour ago before daring to put tooth in it."

Sergy insisted; Boutraix defended his ground, foot by foot, retrenching himself, as usual, behind his irresistible arguments, *prejudice, superstition*, and *fanaticism*. I had never seen him so persistent and scornful in a metaphysical encounter.

But the conversation was not maintained for long at the height of those sublime regions of the intellect, for the wine was capital, and we drank it copiously like persons who had nothing better to do. It was midnight by our watches, and there was nearly a bottle left, when we cried out all together in a transport of joy, as if this conviction had relieved us of a hidden anxiety:

"Midnight; gentlemen, midnight! and Ines de Las Sierras has not come!"

The unanimity with which we had joined in this puerile observation sent us off in a long peal of laughter.

"Body and bones!" said Boutraix, rising on his saturated legs, the oscillation of which he sought to dissimulate under an air of nonchalance and abandon. "Although this beauty has defaulted at our happy reunion, chivalrous gallantry, of which we make a profession, forbids me to forget her. I pledge this goblet to the health of the noble lady, Ines de Las Sierras, and her speedy deliverance!"

"To Ines de Las Sierras!" cried Sergy.

"To Ines de Las Sierras!" I repeated, raising my half-empty glass to their still full ones.

"I am here!" cried a voice from the portrait gallery.

"Hey?" said Boutraix, sitting down. "The pleasantry wasn't bad; only who did it?"

I cast my eyes behind me. Bascara, deathly pale, was clinging to the rungs of my chair as if he had a cramp.

"It's that rascally carriage driver," I replied, "who has got happy on his three bottles of wine de Posada."

"I am here! I am here!" replied the voice. "Health and good cheer to the guests of Ghismondo's castle!"

"It is a woman's voice, and the voice of a young woman," said Sergy, rising with noble and gracious assurance.

At the same instant, in the less brightly lighted part of the hall, we distinguished a white phantom which ran towards us with inconceivable swiftness, and which, within arm's length of us, stopped and let fall its shroud. It passed between us, for we were standing, hands on our sword hilts, and sat down at Ines' place.

"I am here!" said the phantom, uttering a long sigh, and casting back her long black hair on the right and on the left, as it was loosely held by a few knots of flame-colored ribbon. Never had more perfect beauty met my gaze.

"It's really a woman," I remarked, half aloud, "and since it is agreed among us that nothing can happen here that is not entirely natural, we have nothing to concern ourselves about but French politeness. What follows will explain this mystery, if it is to be explained."

We resumed our places, and we served the unknown, who appeared to be distressed by hunger. She ate and drank without speaking. A few minutes later she had completely forgotten us, and each of the personages of this odd scene seemed to be isolated in himself, immobile and dumb, as if he had been tapped with a fairy's petrifying ring.

Bascara had fallen by my side, and I should have thought him dead of terror if I had not been reassured by the palpitating movement of his hands, which were crossed convulsively in prayer.

Boutraix did not let a breath escape him; an expression of profound prostration had replaced his bacchic audacity,

and the bright vermilion of drunkenness, which had shone a minute earlier on his confident face, had changed to mortal pallor.

The feeling which dominated Sergy did not enslave his thoughts with less force; but it was at least softer, to judge by his looks. His eyes, fixed on the apparition with all the fire of love, seemed to force themselves to retain it, like those of a sleeper who fears, by waking, to lose the irretrievable charm of a beautiful dream; and it must be admitted that this illusion was worth the cost of careful preservation, for the whole of nature, perhaps, offered not at that time a living beauty who was worthy of being put in her place. I beg you to believe that I do not exaggerate.

The unknown was not over twenty; but passions, misfortunes—or death—had impressed on her features that strange character of changeless perfection and eternal regularity which the chisel of the ancients consecrated in the type of the gods. Nothing belonging to the earth remained in this countenance, nothing which could suffer offense from a comparison. That was the cool judgment of my reason, thoroughly forearmed long previously against the senseless surprises of love, and it permits me to dispense with a description which each of you may provide for yourself according to the inclination of your fancy.

If you succeed in conceiving anything which approaches reality, you will be getting a thousand times further than all the artifices of speech, of pen and of brush.

Only, and what is quite necessary as a guarantee of my impartiality, let an oblique mark, extremely light, extend across the broad, smooth brow, fading away an inch above the eyebrow; and in the divine glance of those long blue eyes, diffusing an indescribable light between the lashes, black as jade, conceive, if you can, something vague and irresolute, like the uneasiness of restless doubt which would explain itself. These would be the imperfections of my model, and I will answer for it that Sergy did not perceive them.

What most impressed me, however, when I was capable

of occupying myself with such details, was the apparel of our mysterious stranger. I did not doubt having seen it somewhere, a short time previously, and I was not long in recalling that it was in the portrait of Ines. It seemed to have been borrowed, like ours, from the stock of some costumer who was very clever at stage objects, but it was not so fresh as ours. Her green damask dress, still rich, but limp and darkened, fastened here and there by faded ribbons, must have belonged to the wardrobe of some woman who had been dead for a century, and I thought with a shudder that touching it would prove it retained the cold damp of the tomb; but I immediately rejected this idea as unworthy of a rational mind, and was perfectly restored to the free use of my faculties, when, with a bewitching voice, the newcomer finally broke the silence.

"And why, noble chevaliers," said she, letting a reproachful smile flit over her lips, "should I have had the misfortune of disturbing the pleasures of this agreeable evening? You will think of my arrival only as detracting from your enjoyment in being together. When I came, your gay laughter was ringing loudly enough to wake all the night birds which have made their nests in the wainscoting of the castle. Since when has the presence of so young a woman, and one in whom the city and the court have found agreeable foibles, been wont to put gayety to flight? Has the world changed in regard to this since I left it?"

"Pardon, madame," replied Sergy, "such attractiveness is sufficient to surprise us, and admiration is mute like fright."

"I agree with my friend in this explanation," I put in at once. "The feeling which the sight of you inspires is incapable of expression in words. As for your visit itself, it was due to excite in us at least passing astonishment, from which we have had some time to recover. You know that in this ruin, which has so long since lost its inhabitants, in this wild place, at this advanced hour of the night, in this extraordinary disturbance of the elements, there was nothing to announce it to us, nothing to permit us to hope for it.

You will be very welcome, madame, without doubt, everywhere you may deign to appear, but we are waiting respectfully for you to do us the honor you owe us, if it should please you to inform us to whom we have the honor of speaking."

"My name?" she answered quickly. "You do not know it? God is my witness that I came only at your appeal!"

"At our appeal!" gasped Boutraix, raising his hands before his face.

"Truly," she continued, smiling, "and I know too well what is seemly to have acted otherwise. I am Ines de Las Sierras."

"Ines de Las Sierras!" cried Boutraix, in greater consternation than if a thunderbolt had fallen at his side. "Oh, eternal justice!"

I gazed at her fixedly. I vainly sought in her face for anything to betray deception or falsehood.

"Madame," I said, affecting a little more calmness than I really possessed, "the disguises in which you have found us, and which perhaps are really inappropriate to this holy day, hide men who are inaccessible to fear. Whatever may be your name, and whatever the motive which leads you to disguise it, you may expect discreet and respectful hospitality from us; we will even lend ourselves very willingly to recognizing your as Ines de Las Sierras, if this flight of fancy, authorized by circumstances, pleases your imagination. In sooth, so much beauty gives you the right of representing her with the greatest éclat which she ever had; it is the surest of all prestige; but we beg of you to be quite persuaded that this avowal, which costs our courtesy nothing, could not be put upon our credulity."

"I am far from asking it to assume so much," Ines replied with dignity; "but who could contest the title which I take in the very house of my fathers? Oh!" she continued, becoming animated by degrees. "I have paid dearly enough for my first fault to believe the vengeance of God satisfied with its expiation, but can the delayed indulgence which I await from him, and in which I placed my only hope, aban-

don me forever to the torments which devour me, if the name of Ines de Las Sierras is not my name! I am Ines de Las Sierras, the culpable and unhappy Ines! What interest could I have in stealing a name which I should have so much interest in hiding, and by what right do you repulse this avowal, painful enough in itself, for an unfortunate who asks only pity?"

She let fall a few tears, and Sergy drew nearer her with ever-increasing emotion, while Boutraix, who, for some time, had supported his head on his folded arms, let it fall fairly on the table.

"Look, sir!" said she, tearing from her arm a gold bracelet, half gnawed through by the years, and casting it disdainfully before us; "there is the last present from my mother, and the sole jewel of my inheritance which was left me in the misery and disgrace of my life. See if I am really Ines de Las Sierras, or a base adventuress, devoted by the lowness of her birth to the amusement of the populace."

The three mountains sinople on it were encrusted with fine emeralds, and the name *Las Sierras* engraved in antique letters, might still be read distinctly under the blight of time.

I picked up the bracelet respectfully and presented it with a low bow. In the exalted state attained by her spirit she did not notice me.

"If you need other proofs," she went on in a sort of delirium, "have not accounts of my misfortunes reached your ears? See!" she added, detaching the clasp of her dress and showing us the wound in her bosom. "It was there that the poinard struck me!"

"Woe! woe!" cried Boutraix, raising his head, and throwing himself against the back of his chair in unutterable dismay.

"Oh, the men! the men!" said Ines, in a tone of bitter scorn; "they can kill women, and the sight of their wounds makes them afraid!"

The gesture, combining modesty and pity, with which she

drew together the open front of her dress, concealing her breast from Boutraix's terrified eyes, exposed the other to Sergy's, and I understood his intoxication too well to condemn it.

A new silence began, longer, deeper, sadder than the first. Abandoned, for our part, each to his own preoccupation—Boutraix to unreflecting terror, having become incapable of reasoning; Sergy to the internal enjoyment of dawning love, the object of which realized the favorite dreams of his mad imagination; I myself to the meditation of those high mysteries on which I feared I had, in the past, formed rash opinions, we closely resembled those petrified faces of Oriental tales which death has seized in the midst of life, and the features of which forever reflect the expression of the last passing feeling.

Ines' face appeared to be much more animated; but through the multitude of changing aspects which a chain of inexplicable ideas made her assume in turn, as if under the influence of a dream, it would have been impossible to determine which dominated her, when she began again to speak laughingly:

"I do not recall," said she, "what I asked you to explain to me just now; but you well know that my thought cannot suffice for the conversation of men, since a hand which I loved, and which assassinated me, cast me among the dead. Take pity, I beg of you, on the feebleness of an intelligence which is resuscitated, and pardon me for having too long forgotten that I have not yet honored the health which you drank to me as I entered. Gentlemen," she added, rising with infinite grace and raising her glass, "Ines de Las Sierras salutes you and drinks your health in return. To you, noble chevalier! May heaven favor your enterprises! To you, melancholy equerry, whose natural gayety is dispelled by some secret trouble! May more propitious days restore unmixed serenity! To you, handsome page, whose tender languor tells of a soul engrossed by the sweetest cares! May the happy woman who has attracted your love reply to it with a love worthy of you; and if you do not yet love,

may you soon love a beauty who loves you! Your healths, gentlemen!"

"Oh! I do love, and I love forever!" cried Sergy. "Who could see you and not love you? To Ines of Las Sierras! to the beautiful Ines!"

"To Ines de Las Sierras!" I replied, rising from my arm-chair.

"To Ines de Las Sierras!" murmured Boutraix, without changing his position, and for the first time in his life he uttered a solemn toast without drinking.

"To all of you!" returned Ines, raising her glass to her lips for the second time, but without emptying it.

Sergy grasped it ardently to drink. I know not why I should have wished to stop him, as if I thought he would quaff of death.

As for Boutraix, he had fallen in a kind of reflective stupor which absorbed his whole soul.

"That is well," said Ines, throwing an arm around Sergy's neck, and placing on his heart as incendiary a hand as that mentioned in Estevan's legend. "This evening is sweeter and more charming than any of which I have retained memory. We are all so gay and happy! Do you not think, Sir Equerry, that no charm is wanting but that of music?"

"Oh!" said Boutraix, who could hardly articulate anything else. "Is she going to sing?"

"Sing, sing!" urged Sergy, passing his hands tremblingly through Ines' hair; "your Sergy begs you!"

"I should be very glad to," answered Ines, "but the dampness of those vaults must have altered my voice, which was once considered beautiful and pure, and besides, I don't know anything but sad songs, far from worthy of a bacchic *tertulia,* in which none but joyous airs should resound. Wait," she continued, raising her celestial eyes toward the ceiling, and making a prelude of charming sounds. "It's the romance of *Nina Matada,* which will be new to you and to me, for I shall compose it while singing."

There is nobody who would not have felt how much the animated movement of improvisation lends to the seductive-

ness of an inspired voice. Woe to the man who writes his thoughts coldly, elaborated, discussed, tested by reflection and time! He will never move a soul in its most secret sympathies. To assist at the production of a great conception, to see it launched forth by the genius of the artist, like Minerva from Jupiter's head, to feel one's self carried away in its lofty strain to unknown realms of the imagination, on the wings of eloquence, of poetry, of music, is the keenest of enjoyments which have been given our imperfect nature; it is the only one which approaches, on earth, the divinity from which it takes its origin.

What I have told you is what I felt at hearing Ines' first accents. For what I felt later there are no terms in language capable of expressing. The two elements of my nature separate distinctly in my thoughts: the one, inert and gross, remained fixed by its own material weight in one of Ghismondo's armchairs; the other, already transformed, rose toward Heaven with Ines' words, and received all the impressions of a new life of inexhaustible pleasures. You may be perfectly sure that if any unhappy genius has doubted the existence of this eternal principle, the imperishable soul, enchained for a space in the ways of our fleeting life, it is because he never heard Ines sing, or any woman who sang like her.

My senses, as you know, do not oppose emotion of this kind; but I do not believe, by any means, that they are sensitive enough to entertain its full effect. It was otherwise with Sergy, whose whole organization was that of a scarcely captive soul, and who was attached to humanity only by some fragile bond, always ready to liberate it when it wished to become free. Sergy cried, Sergy sobbed, Sergy was carried out of himself.

And when Ines, transported, went on to lose herself in still more sublime inspirations than all we had heard, she seemed to call him toward her with her smile. Boutraix was slightly recovered from his mournful dismay, and fixed two great, attentive eyes on Ines, in which an expression of astonished pleasure had, for a moment, replaced that of fear. Bascara

had not changed his position, but the soft feelings of a virtuoso began to triumph over the fears of a man of the people. From time to time he raised a face on which admiration struggled with terror, and sighed with ecstasy or envy.

A cry of enthusiasm succeeded Ines' song. She herself poured out for all to drink, and deliberately clinked her glass against Boutraix's. He drew it back with an ill-assured hand, watched her drink, and drank. I refilled the glass once more, and I saluted Ines.

"Alas!" said she, "I can no longer sing, or rather, this hall has betrayed my voice. Formerly there wasn't an atom of air in it which did not respond to me, and which did not lend me its accordance. Nature no longer grants me the all-powerful harmonies which I drew forth, which I listened to, which joined with my words, when I was happy and beloved. Oh, Sergy!" she continued, regarding him tenderly, "one must be loved to sing!"

"Loved!" cried Sergy, covering her hand with kisses, "adored, Ines, idolized like a goddess! If it only requires the unreserved sacrifice of a heart, of a soul, of eternity, to inspire thy genius, sing, Ines, sing again, sing forever!"

"I danced also," replied she, resting her head languishingly on Sergy's shoulder, "but how dance without music? For a marvel!" she added suddenly, "some demon has slipped some castanets under my belt," and she disengaged them laughingly.

"Irrevocable day of damnation!" said Boutraix, "then you have come! The mystery of mysteries is fulfilled! The last judgment approaches! She is going to dance!"

As Boutraix ceased speaking, Ines had risen, and was beginning with grave and slowly measured steps, displaying with imposing grace the majesty of her form and the nobility of her poses.

Changing from place to place and appearing in new guises, she astonished the imagination as if another beautiful woman had come before our eyes, she understood so well how to improve on herself in the variety of her poses and movements.

Thus, by rapid transitions, we saw her pass from serious dignity to the moderate transports of growing enjoyment, then to the soft languors of voluptuousness, to a delirium of delight, to ecstasy still more delirious, which is indescribable. Then she drew away into the shadows of the immense hall, disappearing, and in measure as she moved farther off, the sound of the castanets became weaker, diminishing, diminishing continually, until one had ceased to hear it in ceasing to perceive her; then it came back from the distance, augmented by degrees, burst out with full force when she reappeared suddenly under the torrents of light at the spot where one least expects her; and then she advanced so near as to brush us with her dress, making the reawakened castanets clap with deafening volubility, like the humming of locusts, and uttering here and there, in their monotonous clatter, sharp but tender cries which touched the soul.

Again, she withdrew once more, half concealed in the shadow, appearing and disappearing, escaping from our eyes, and seeking to let herself be seen; and then one no longer saw her, one no longer heard aught but a distant and plaintive note like a dying sigh; and we were overcome, trembling with admiration and fear, awaiting the moment when her veil should be dispelled by the motion of the dance and she should come, floating and sparkling, into the light of the torches, or her voice should apprise us of her return by a joyous cry, to which we should reply without willing it, because it made a hundred hidden harmonies vibrate in us.

Then she returned, whirled like a flower detached from its stem by the wind, sprang from the earth as if it rested with her to leave it forever, came down to it again as if it rested with her not to touch it; she did not leap from the ground; you would have thought that she merely spurted upward, and that a mysterious decree of her destiny forbade her to touch it except to flee it. And her head, inclined with an air of caressing impatience, and her arms, curved gracefully as if with appeal and prayer, seemed to implore us to retain her. Sergy yielded, when I was about to yield, to this imperious attraction, and folded her to his bosom.

"Stay," said he, "or I die!"

"I go," she replied, "and I die if you do not come! Soul of Ines, do you not come?"

She fell, half sitting, on Sergy's armchair, her hands twined around his neck, and, for this once, she had assuredly ceased to see us.

"Will I come!" cried Sergy. "Eternal death rather than not follow you everywhere!"

"Who loves me follows me," replied Ines, uttering a peal of uncanny laughter.

At the same instant, she picked up her shroud, and we no longer saw her; the obscurity of the distant parts of the hall had hidden her for the last time.

I threw myself in front of Sergy, and grasped him firmly. Boutraix, brought to himself by his friend's peril, came to second me. Even Bascara got up.

"As your elder," I said to Sergy, "as your old comrade in arms, as your captain, I forbid you to take a step. Do you not see that this woman, who is so seductive, is only the magic means of a band of robbers, hidden in this terrible castle, to separate us to our destruction? If you were alone and free to dispose of yourself, I could understand your fatal bewilderment, and I could only mourn you; Ines is all that is necessary to justify such a sacrifice. But think that they hope to reduce us by isolating us, and that if we are to die here we ought to die otherwise than in a vile ambush, and should sell our lives dearly to the assassins. Sergy, you belong to us before all; you shall not leave us!"

Sergy, his reason seemingly confounded by many contrary sentiments, regarded me fixedly, and fell inert in his chair.

"Gentlemen," I then said, with considerable firmness, "there is a secret here which no human intelligence can penetrate. It is hidden, without doubt, in some natural fact, the explanation of which would force us to smile, but which foils the strivings of our minds. Whatever it may be, it behooves us not to lend the authority of our evidence to superstitions unworthy of Christianity and philosophy. It behooves us above all not to compromise the honor of three

French officers by describing a very extraordinary scene, for such I admit it to be, but the solution of which, developed sooner or later, would greatly risk exposing us some day to public derision. I swear now on my honor, and I expect the same oath of you, never in all my life to speak of what has taken place to-night, unless the causes of this strange event are made clearly known to me."

"We swear it also," said Sergy and Boutraix.

"I take the Holy Savior as witness," said Bascara, "by the faith which I have in His Holy Nativity, the glorious commemoration of which is now being celebrated, never to speak of it even to my director, under the seal of the sacrament of penitence; and that the name of the Lord may be honored through all the centuries!"

"Amen," returned Boutraix, embracing him with sincere effusiveness. "I beg you, dear brother, not to forget me in your prayers, for, unfortunately I no longer know mine."

The night advanced. An uneasy sleep overcame us one by one. I need not tell you by what dreams it was agitated. The sun rose in the morn in a purer sky than we could have hoped for in the evening, and without exchanging a word, we gained Barcelona, where we arrived at an early hour.

"And then?" said Anastasia.

"And then? Why do you ask? Isn't the story finished?"

"I do not know why it seems to me to lack something more," said Eudoxia.

"What would you like me to tell you? Two days later we returned to Gironne, where we awaited marching orders for the regiment. The reverses of the grand army forced the Emperor to reunite the pick of his troops in the north. There I found myself again with Boutraix, who had become devout since he had talked in person with a soul from Purgatory, and with Sergy, who had not changed in love since becoming infatuated with a phantom. At the first discharge in the battle of Lutzen, Sergy was at my side. He bent over suddenly, and rested his head on my horse's neck, pierced by a mortal wound.

"'Ines,' he murmured, 'I am going to rejoin you,' and breathed his last."

"I suppose," said the prosecutor, "that it may be proper to adjourn if that is agreeable to the ladies."

"Until the next time," I continued, "you can exercise your imagination in seeking the explanation which I promise. I notify you again, however, that this is a true story from beginning to end, and that in all I have told you there is neither the supernatural, nor mystification, nor thieves."

"Nor a ghost?" said Eudoxia.

"Nor a ghost," I returned, rising and taking my hat.

"So much the worse then!" said Anastasia.

II

"But if it wasn't a real apparition," said Anastasia, as soon as I had sat down, "let us know what it was. I have been thinking it over for a month without finding any reasonable explanation for your story."

"Nor I either," said Eudoxia.

"I haven't had time to think about it," said the law student, "but so far as I recall it appertained decidedly to the fantastic."

"There is nothing more natural, however," I said, "and everybody has heard of, or seen, much more extraordinary things than those which remain for me to tell you, if you are disposed to listen to me again."

The circle drew a little closer, for in the long evenings in a little town, one has nothing better to do than to lend ear to odd tales while awaiting sleep. I entered upon the subject:

I told you that peace had been made, that Sergy was dead, Boutraix a monk, and I no longer anything but a petty proprietor at his ease. The arrears of my revenues had almost made me opulent, and a heritage which came on top of the rest enriched me with a ridiculous superfluity. I

resolved to spend it in instructive travels and pleasures, and I hesitated a little over the question of what country I should visit; but this was only a feint of my reason struggling against my heart. My heart called me back to Barcelona, and this narrative would form, if it were in its place here, an accessory much longer than the principal.

What is sure is that a letter from Pablo de Clauza, the dearest of the friends I had left in Catalonia, finally decided me. Pablo married Léonore, Léonore was the sister of Estelle, and this Estelle, of whom I shall talk to you very little, was the heroine of a romance of which I shall not talk to you at all.

I arrived too late for the wedding; it had taken place three days before, but it continued, according to custom, in fêtes which were prolonged sometimes beyond the sweetness of the honeymoon. It was not to be so in Pablo's family, for he was worthy of being loved by a very amiable woman, and is as happy to-day as he then hoped to be. This happens occasionally, but one shouldn't brag of it.

Estelle received me as a regretted friend whom one desires to see again, and my relations with her had not occasioned me to expect more, especially after two years' absence, for this happened in 1814, in the interval of that short European peace, which separates the first restoration from the 20th of March.

"We have dined at an earlier hour than usual," said Pablo, "but supper will make amends; that will leave an hour, however, for the cares of the toilet, and there is no one here who wants to make use of the seats which I took for the somewhat unique representation of La Pedrina. This virtuoso is so fantastic! Heaven knows whether she will not elude us to-morrow."

"La Pedrina?" said I, reflectively. "This name has already struck me more than once, and under such memorable circumstances that I shall never lose the recollection of it. Isn't she that extraordinary singer, that still more extraordinary dancer, who disappeared from Madrid after a day of triumph, and of whom no trace was ever afterwards

found? She no doubt justifies the curiosity of which she is the object, by talents which suffer no comparison in other theaters; but I avow that a singular occurrence in my life has made me quite blasé to this kind of distraction, and that I am in nowise curious to hear or see La Pedrina herself."

"Just as you prefer," replied Pablo. "I believe, nevertheless, that Estelle is counting on you as an escort."

I forgot that I had sworn to myself that I would never see a dancer again, that I would never hear another singer, after Ines de Las Sierras, but I thought myself sure of seeing and hearing no one but Estelle that day.

I talked for a long time, and I should be much embarrassed to say what they were playing. Even the commotion which announced the entrance of La Pedrina did not stir me; I remained calm, half covering my eyes with my hand, when the profound silence which had given place to this fleeting emotion was broken by a voice which it was not possible for me to ignore. Ines' voice had never ceased to resound in my ears; it pursued me in my meditations, it lulled me in my dreams; and the voice which I heard was Ines' voice!

I shivered, I uttered a cry, I threw myself against the front of the box, with my gaze fixed on the stage. It was Ines, Ines herself!

My first impulse was to seek to gather to me every circumstance, every fact which could confirm me in the idea that I was in Barcelona, that I was at the play, that I was not, as for every day I had been, for two years, the dupe of my imagination; that one of my habitual dreams had not surprised me.

I forced myself to lay hold on something which might convince me of the reality of my sensations. I found Estelle's hand and pressed it firmly.

"Well," she said, smiling, "you were so sure that you were proof against the seductions of a woman's voice! La Pedrina scarcely begins her prelude, and you are carried away!"

"Are you certain, Estelle," replied I, "that this is La Pedrina here? Do you know beyond doubt that this is a woman, an actress, and not an apparition?"

"In truth," she replied, "it is a woman, an extraordinary actress, a singer such as never before has been seen, possibly, but I do not imagine that there may be nothing more. Your enthusiasm, take care," she added coldly, "has something disturbing for those who concern themselves about you. You are not the first, they say, who has lost his senses at the sight of her, and this weakness of heart probably would not flatter your wife, nor your mistress."

Upon finishing these words she quite withdrew her hand, and I let it escape; La Pedrina sang on.

Then she danced, and my thoughts, carried with her, yielded themselves without resistance to all the impressions she was pleased to give them. The universal intoxication hid my own, but increased it still more; and the whole time which had passed away between our two meetings was lost to our perception, because no sensation of the same sort and of the same strength had renewed the other before; it seemed to me that I was still at the Castle of Ghismondo, but at the Castle of Ghismondo enlarged, decorated, thronged with an immense crowd.

The acclamations which arose on every hand, rang in my ears like the joy of demons. And La Pedrina, possessed by a sublime frenzy, which the Inferno alone could inspire and entertain, continued devouring the floor with her steps, fleeing, returning, flying, driven or brought back by invisible impulses, until, panting, exhausted, prostrated, she fell into the arms of the attendants, murmuring a name which I believed I heard and which echoed sadly in my heart.

"Sergy is dead!" I cried, tears escaping my eyes, as I extended my arms toward the stage.

"You are actually mad," said Estelle, retaining me in my place. "Calm yourself. She is no longer there."

"Mad!" replied I, "can that be so? Have I believed that I saw what I did not see? Believed that I heard what I did not hear?—Mad, great Heaven! Separated from

mankind and from Estelle by an infirmity which will make me a public topic. Fatal Castle of Ghismondo, is this the punishment which you hold for those so rash as to dare to violate your secrets? A thousand times more fortunate is Sergy, dead on the field of Lutzen!"

I was overcome by these ideas when I felt Estelle's arm slip into mine to leave the spectacle.

"Alas!" I said, trembling, for I was beginning to come to myself, "I must arouse your pity, but I should arouse it much more if you knew a story which it is not permitted me to relate. What has just happened is to me only the continuation of a terrible illusion from which my mind has never been entirely freed. Allow me to keep my thoughts to myself, and, so far as I may, restore them to some order and connection. The pleasures of an agreeable conversation are forbidden me to-day; I shall be calmer to-morrow."

"You shall be just as you like to-morrow," said Pablo, who, in passing close to us had caught my last words, "but you certainly shall not leave us this evening. Nevertheless," he added, "I count more on Estelle's persuasion to decide you than on my own."

"Let it be so," she replied. "Will you not consent to give us the time which you had doubtless reserved for occupying yourself with La Pedrina?"

"In Heaven's name!" I cried, "do not mention her name again, my dear Estelle, for the feeling I entertain does not in the least resemble the sentiment which you might suspect, if that indeed is not terror. Why must it be that I cannot explain myself better?"

It was necessary to yield. I was seated at supper without taking part at it, and, as I expected, they spoke only of La Pedrina.

"The interest which this extraordinary woman arouses in you," Pablo said suddenly, "has something so exalted about it that one could scarcely conceive of a possibility of augmenting it. What would it be, though, if you knew of her adventures, part of which, indeed, took place at Barcelona, but at a time when most of us were not established

here? You would be obliged to admit that La Pedrina's misfortunes are not less surprising than her talents."

Nobody replied, for all were listening, and Pablo, perceiving it, continued thus:

"La Pedrina did not belong to the class from which her like are usually derived, and in which are recruited those nomadic troupes which destiny devotes to the pleasure of the multitude. Her rightful name has been borne, in past ages, by one of the most illustrious families in old Spain. She is called Ines de Las Sierras."

"Ines de Las Sierras!" I cried, rising from my chair in a state of exaltation difficult to describe. "Ines de Las Sierras! Is it true then! But do you know, Pablo, who Ines de Las Sierras is? Do you know whence she comes, and by what awful privilege she is heard in a theater?"

"I know," said Pablo, smiling, "that she is a rare and unfortunate creature, whose life deserves at least as much pity as admiration. As for the emotion which her name causes you, it in no wise astonishes me, for it is probable that it has struck you more than once in the lamentable complaints of our *Romanceros*."

The story thus recalled to the memory of our friend [he pursued, addressing himself to the others] is one of those popular traditions of the Middle Ages, which were probably founded on some real facts, or on some specious appearances, and which are maintained from generation to generation in the memory of men, to the extent of acquiring a kind of historical authority. This one, whatever it may be, enjoyed great credit as early as the sixteenth century, since it forced the noble family of Las Sierras to expatriate itself with all its possessions, and to profit by the new discoveries of navigation to transport its domicile to Mexico. What is certain is that the tragic fatality which pursued it was not relaxed in other climes. I have often heard it asserted that for three centuries all of its chiefs died by the sword.

At the beginning of the century in which we are passing

the fourteenth year, the last of the noble lords of Las Sierras still lived in Mexico. Death had taken away his wife, and only a daughter six or seven years old, whom he had named Ines, remained to him. More brilliant talents were never announced at a more tender age, and the Marquis of Las Sierras spared nothing to cultivate these precious gifts which promised so much glory and happiness to his old age. Too happy, indeed, if the education of his only daughter could have absorbed all his care and affection; but he felt soon the sad need of filling the profound void of his heart with yet another sentiment.

He loved, believed himself beloved, and was engrossed with his choice; he did more: he congratulated himself that he was giving Ines another mother, and he gave her an implacable enemy. Ines' keen intelligence was not slow in perceiving the difficulties of her new position. She soon learned that the arts, which until then had been only an object of distraction and pleasure, might one day become her sole resource. After that she gave herself up to them with an ardor which was crowned with unexampled success, and at the end of a few years she found no more masters. The most skillful and presumptuous would have felt honored to have received lessons from her; but she paid dearly for this advantage, if it is true that at that time her pure and brilliant mind, worn out by excessive work, began gradually to change, and that fleeting illusions began to betray the disorder of her mind at the moment when she seemed to have nothing more to acquire. One day the inanimate body of the Marquis of Las Sierras was brought home. He had been found, pierced with wounds, in a lonely place, where there was no other circumstance to cast any light on the motive or author of this cruel assassination. Public opinion was not slow, however, in designating a culprit. Ines' father had no known enemy, but before his second marriage he had had a rival, a man who was marked in Mexico by the ardor of his passions and the violence of his character. Everyone named him in his private thoughts; but this universal suspicion could not take the form of an accusation,

because it was not justified by any proof. The conjectures of the multitude continued to grow stronger, until the victim's widow was seen, after a few months, to pass to the arms of the assassin, and if nothing since has happened to confirm them, nothing, at least, has diminished the impression.

Ines remained solitary in the house of her fathers, with two persons who were equally strangers, whom a secret instinct rendered equally odious, and to whom the law blindly confided the authority by which it replaced that of her family. The attacks which had occasionally menaced her reason multiplied alarmingly, and nobody was surprised at it, although the greater part of her misfortunes were generally unguessed.

There was a young Sicilian in Mexico who went under the name of Gaetano Filippi, whose former life seemed to hide some suspected mystery. A slight acquaintance with the arts, an ingratiating address marred by frivolity, elegance which betrayed study and affectation, that veneer of politeness which worthy people owe to education, and designing people connect with society, had given him access to circles which his lack of breeding should have closed to him. Ines, scarcely sixteen years old, was too ingenuous and high-minded to penetrate his deceptive exterior. She mistook the confusion of her senses for the revelation of first love.

Gaetano was not at a loss how to make himself known under advantageous titles; he understood the art of procuring what he needed, giving them every appearance of authenticity necessary for fascinating the most skillful and practiced eyes. It was in vain, nevertheless, that he demanded Ines' hand. This unfortunate girl's mother-in-law had formed the project of assuring her fortune; and it is probable that she would not have been scrupulous in choosing the means.

It was with Ines' organization as with all those favored by genius in a superior degree. She combined with the height of her sublime talent the feebleness of character

which relies on others for guidance. In the life of the intellect and of art she was an angel. In everyday, practical life, she was a child. The mere semblance of friendly sentiment captivated her heart, and when her heart had submitted, her judgment raised no objections. This disposition of mind is not baleful under happy conditions and wise direction; but the only being to whom Ines could intrust this sway in the sad isolation following her father's death, acted only for her destruction; and therein was the horrible secret that innocence suspects nothing. Gaetano prevailed upon her, almost without effort, to favor an elopement on which he made her welfare seem to depend. There remained no difficulty for him in convincing her that he possessed a great heritage by legitimate right; they disappeared; and after a few months, abundantly supplied with gold, jewels, and diamonds, they arrived at Cadiz.

Here the veil was raised; but Ines' eyes, still dazzled by the false light of love, long refused to see the whole truth. Meanwhile, the circle into which Gaetano had brought her often alarmed her by the license of its principles; she was astonished that the passage from one hemisphere to another could produce such strange differences in manners and language; she timorously sought any thought answering hers in the crowd of libertines and courtesans which composed her habitual society—but did not find it.

The ephemeral resources of money, gained by an action in regard to which her conscience was not quite reassured, were beginning, moreover, to slip away, and Gaetano's hypocritical tenderness seemed to diminish with them.

One day she vainly awaited his return, and she waited vainly that night; the following day she passed from uncertainty to fear, from fear to despair; the frightful reality at last completed her misery. He had departed after despoiling her of everything, gone with another woman; he had abandoned her, impoverished, dishonored, and, for a final misfortune, given her up to her own scorn. The resource of lofty pride, which reacts when the soul is without reproach, was broken in Ines. She had taken the name of

Pedrina to foil the search of her unworthy parents. "Pedrina let it be!" she said with bitter resolution, "ignominy and shame are mine, for fate has willed it so." She was thereafter only La Pedrina.

You will readily perceive why I cease to follow all the details of her life; she has not revealed them. We shall not rediscover her until that memorable début at Madrid, which placed her so promptly in the first rank of the most celebrated virtuosos. Enthusiasm was so violent and passionate that the whole city echoed the applause of the theater. The crowd, which had accompanied her to her lodgings with acclamations, would not consent to disperse until having seen her once more at the windows of her apartment.

But that was not all the sentiment that she had excited. Her beauty, which, indeed, was not less remarkable than her talents, had produced a profound impression upon an illustrious personage, who at that time held in his hands a good part of the destinies of Spain, and whom you will permit me not to designate more precisely. Never mind whether this anecdote of an unfortunate life is not sufficiently illumined by my historical conscience, or whether it is distasteful to me to add a weakness, otherwise excusable enough, to the mistakes with which shifting opinion rightly or wrongly taxes fallen kings.

Certainly she did not reappear on the stage, and the favors of fortune were heaped in a few days upon this obscure adventuress, whose shame and misery had been known for a year in the neighboring provinces. One no longer heard of anything but the variety of her toilets, the richness of her jewels, the luxury of her equipage. Contrary to custom, this sudden opulence was pardoned, because there were very few men among her judges who would not have been glad to have given her a hundred times as much.

It is necessary to add, to La Pedrina's honor, that the treasures which she owed to love were not expended in idle fancies. Naturally compassionate and generous, she sought out misfortune to make reparation; she carried succor and

consolation to the sad retreat of the poor and the bedside of the sick; she relieved the unfortunate with a grace which added still more to her beneficence; and, although a favorite, she made herself beloved by the people. That is so easy when one is rich!

La Pedrina's name gained too much renown not to reach Gaetano's ears, in the obscure quarter where he had concealed his shameful life. The products of theft and treason, which had so far supported him, had just failed his needs. He regretted having despised the resources which he might have drawn from the subjection of his mistress. He conceived the project of retrieving his mistake at any price, even at the price of a new crime. That was what would cost him the least. He counted on a skill that had been too often exercised to allow him any distrust. He knew Ines' heart, and the wretch did not hesitate to present himself before her.

Gaetano's justification was at first seemingly impossible, but there is nothing impossible to a deigning mind, especially when seconded by the blind credulity of love; and Gaetano was not merely the first man who had made Ines' heart throb; he was the only one she had ever loved. All her bewilderment, too, had left her heart empty and indifferent; and, by a privilege, no doubt very rare, but not unprecedented, she had suffered without being debased.

The romance of Gaetano, absurd as it was, preserved the credit of vanity. Ines had need of believing in it in order to regain some semblance of her vanished happiness, and her mental disposition was that which contents itself with the slightest verisimilitude. It is likely that she did not dare even to consider the objections which crowded into her thoughts for fear of finding one which would prove unanswerable. It is so sweet to be mistaken about a person whom one loves, when one cannot cease to love!

The perfidious villain, moveover, did not neglect any of his advantages. This was his story: He had returned from Sicily, where he had gone to persuade his family to permit his marriage. He had succeeded. His mother her-

self had deigned to accompany him to Spain, to hasten the moment when she should see the cherished daughter of whom she had formed the most flattering idea. What horrible news met him at Barcelona! The report of La Pedrina's success reached him together with that of her sin and ignominy. Was that the price which she had reserved for so much love and so much sacrifice? The first idea, the first sentiment which he found himself capable of entertaining was the resolution to die, but his tenderness had prevailed over his despair. He had hidden his sad secret from his mother; he had flown to Madrid to speak to Ines, to make her listen, if there were still time, to the voice of honor and virtue; he had come to pardon her, and he did pardon her! (What do you expect?)

Ines, bathed in tears, frightened, trembling, overcome by remorse, by gratitude and joy, fell at the impostor's feet; and hypocrisy triumphed almost without effort over a heart too sensitive and confiding to divine it. This sudden change in rôle and position, which gave the culprit all the rights of innocence, may partake of the astonishing. But ask the women about it! There is nothing commoner.

Ines' suspicions, however, were due to be reawakened when she saw that Gaetano was more concerned about loading the wagon prepared for their journey with those treasures, the source of which she could not remember without blushing, than about carrying off her herself. She insisted vainly that they should abandon everything. She was not listened to.

Four days later, a traveling carriage stopped at Barcelona before the Hôtel de l'Italie. An elegantly attired young man and a lady who seemed to avoid the eyes of travelers and passersby, were seen to alight. They were Gaetano and La Pedrina. A quarter of an hour later the young man went out and directed himself toward the port.

The absence of Gaetano's mother served only too well to confirm the fears which Ines had began to conceive. It seems that she must have gained sufficient ascendency over her timidity to express them without circumlocution when

he returned to his apartment. It is certain at least that a violent discussion between them arose in the evening and was renewed several times in the night.

At daybreak Gaetano, pale, agitated, unstrung, had the domestics carry several boxes to a vessel which was due to sail in the morning. He repaired thither himself with a much smaller box which he had enveloped in the folds of his mantle. Upon reaching the vessel he dismissed the men who had followed him, under the pretext of being detained longer by certain arrangements, paid them handsomely for their trouble, and directed them in the most express terms not to trouble madame's sleep before his return. Meanwhile, a great part of the day passed without the stranger reappearing. It was reported that the ship had set sail, and one of the men who had accompanied Gaetano, disturbed by a sinister presentiment, was tempted to assure himself of it. He saw her sails sinking below the horizon.

The silence which continued to reign in Ines' apartment, in the midst of the noises in the house, became disquieting. It was supposed that the door had not been locked from the inside, but from the outside, because the key had not been left in the lock. The host did not hesitate to open the door with a duplicate key, and a horrible spectacle was presented to his eyes. The unknown lady was lying on the bed in the attitude of one who sleeps, and they might have been misled if she had not been bathed in blood. Her bosom had been pierced by a poniard while she slept, and the assassin's weapon was still in the wound.

You will readily pardon me for not having verified these shocking details. They were known at the time to the whole city. What is still unknown to the very persons whom the fate of this unfortunate creature touched the most, for it was only a few days before she was in a state of recovery and capable of bringing the confused memory of her adventures into some order,—was that the unfortunate victim of this attempt was the divine Pedrina whom Madrid never forgot, and that La Pedrina was Ines de Las Sierras.

To return to my narrative [continued Pablo], the witnesses gathered at this scene of horror, and the doctors whom they had called on the spot were not long in discovering that the unknown lady was not dead. Care already late, but hastily given, was so successful that they saw signs of life reawaken in her. Several days were passed, nevertheless, in alternate fear and hope which keenly excited public sympathy.

A month later Ines' recovery seemed entirely established, but delirium, which manifested itself from the moment that she recovered speech, and which was attributed to the effect of high fever, yielded neither to remedies nor to time. The poor creature had been resuscitated in her physical life, but she remained dead in the life of the intellect. She was mad.

A community of holy women received her and continued the solicitous attentions which her state demanded. The object of every regard of an almost providential charity, it was said that she justified it by touching docility, for her alienation had none of that wildness and violence which ordinarily characterize this frightful malady. It was, moreover, frequently interrupted by lucid intervals, more or less prolonged, which from day to day offered better foundation for hopes of her recovery; they became so frequent that much of the attention which had been given to her slightest acts or feelings was relaxed; they grew accustomed, little by little, to leaving her to herself, and she took advantage of this negligence to escape. Anxiety was great, and a search was vigorously carried on; its success at first seemed to be assured.

Ines had attracted attention during the first days of her wanderings by her incomparable beauty, by the natural nobility of her manners, and also by the intermittent disorder of her ideas and of her speech. She had been noticed particularly on account of the singular appearance of her attire, which was composed at haphazard of elegant, but flimsy remnants of her theatrical costume, showy fabrics, but of little value, which the Sicilian had disdained to appropriate,

and the odd assortment of which, borrowed from the apparel of luxury, contrasted singularly with the sack of coarse material, which she carried on her shoulder to receive the charity of the people.

They followed her by this means to a little distance from Mattaro, but at that point all trace of her was lost and could not be recovered. Ines had disappeared from all eyes two days before Christmas, and when the profound melancholy of her mind, whenever it was free from the habitual clouds, was recalled, no one hesitated to think that she had ended her days by throwing herself into the sea. This explanation presented itself so naturally that scarcely anyone took the trouble to seek another. The unknown was dead, and the impression which this news made lasted for two days. On the third it grew weaker, like all impressions, and on the day after that it was spoken of no more.

An exceedingly unusual occurrence at that time contributed greatly toward distracting attention from Ines' disappearance and the tragic conclusion of her adventures. There existed in the neighborhood of the town, where the last traces of her had been lost, an old ruined manor known as the Castle of Ghismondo, which the Devil, it was said, had held in his possession for several centuries, and in which, tradition had it, he held a séance every year on Christmas eve.

The existing generation had never seen anything capable of giving any authority to this ridiculous superstition, and folk were no longer disturbed about it; but circumstances which have never been explained restored its claims in 1812. There was no ground for doubting on this occasion that the accursed castle was inhabited by strange guests who indulged without secrecy in the joys of a banquet. A splendid illumination burst at midnight from the apartments, which had been so long deserted, and spread dismay and terror in the neighboring hamlets. Some belated travelers, whom chance had brought under its walls, heard a confused sound of unearthly voices and, at moments, songs of infinite sweetness. The phenomena of a stormy night, the like of which

Catalonia did not recall so far advanced in the season, added still more to the solemnity of the strange scene, the details of which credulity and fear did not fail to exaggerate.

Nothing was talked of on the following day and those succeeding, for several leagues around, but the return of the spirits to the house of Ghismondo, and the concurrence of so many witnesses, who were agreed on all the chief circumstances of the event, ended by inspiring the police with well-founded alarm. In truth, the French troops had been recalled from their garrisons to re-enforce the remnants of the army in Germany, and the time might have seemed favorable for a renewal of the attempts of the old Spanish party, which were beginning, moreover, to be fomented in a decidedly appreciable manner in our ill-subjected departments.

The administration, little disposed to share the beliefs of the populace, saw then, in this pretended convention of demons, faithful to their annual rendezvous, nothing but a gathering of conspirators who were all ready to unfurl once more the flag of civil war. It ordered an immediate visit to the mysterious manor, and this investigation, by evident proofs, confirmed the reports which had occasioned it. They found indications of the illumination and festivities, and they were enabled to conjecture from the number of empty bottles which still garnished the table that the convivial party had been very numerous.

. . . . . .

(At this passage in Pablo's narrative, which recalled to my mind the inextinguishable thirst and immoderate libations of Boutraix, I could not contain an impulsive burst of laughter which interrupted him, and which contrasted too oddly with the frame of mind in which he had found me at the beginning of the story, not to occasion him extreme surprise. He regarded me gravely, waiting until I should succeed in repressing my outburst of unseemly gayety, and upon finding me calmer, he continued.)

. . . . . .

The meeting, held by such a number of men probably

armed, and certainly mounted, for there were also the remains of forage, had become a thing demonstrated to everybody, but none of the conspirators was found at the castle, and all attempts to trace them were unavailing. The authorities have never gained the least light on this singular affair since the epoch when it ceased to be reprehensible, and when it would have been more advantageous to have owned it than it was then necessary to maintain silence. The party which had been charged with this little expedition was getting ready to depart, when a soldier discovered, in one of the subterranean parts of the castle, a girl, strangely clad, who seemed deprived of her reason, and who, far from shunning him, hastened to run to him, uttering some name which he did not remember:

"It is you?" she cried. "How long you have made me wait!" Brought out into the daylight, she recognized her error, and burst into tears.

This young girl you already know was La Pedrina. Her description, sent several days previously to all authorities along the coast, was perfectly familiar to them. They sent her immediately to Barcelona, after having made her submit, in one of her lucid moments, to a strict questioning concerning the inexplicable event of Christmas eve; but it had left in her mind only confused traces, and her evidence, the sincerity of which they could not suspect, served merely to increase the complications of the investigation. It appeared to be proved only that a strange aberration of her disordered imagination had made her seek in the manor of the lords of Las Sierras an asylum guaranteed by the rights of birth; that she had gained entrance to it with difficulty, in profiting by the narrow opening which its battered doors left between them, and that for a few days she had lived on her own provisions, and after that on those which the strangers had abandoned.

As for them, she did not seem to know them; and the description which she gave of their attire, which was not that of any living race, was so improbable that they attributed it without hesitation to a dream which she con-

founded with reality. What seemed more evident, was that one of the adventurers or conspirators had made a keen impression on her heart, and that only the hope of finding him again gave her courage to continue to live. But she had understood that he was hunted, that his liberty and perhaps his life was menaced, and the most assiduous and obstinate efforts could not tear from her the secret of his name.

. . . . . .

This last turn of Pablo's narration recalled, in a new aspect, the memory of a friend whose last word I had received. My bosom swelled, my eyes filled with tears, and I raised my hand to them quickly to conceal my emotion from those around me. Pablo stopped as before and fixed his eyes on me with still more marked attention. I easily divined the idea which he entertained, and I tried to reassure him by a smile. "Be easy," I said to him, "in regard to the alternation of sadness and gayety which your singular story makes me evince. It is only natural in my position, and you will admit it yourself as soon as I have had time to explain it. Go on meanwhile, and pardon me for having interrupted you, for La Pedrina's adventures are not finished."

. . . . . .

There remains little more [continued Pablo]. She was taken back to her convent, and placed under more strict surveillance. An old doctor, deeply versed in the study of affections of the mind, whom happy chance had brought to Barcelona, undertook her cure. He perceived at once that it offered great difficulties, for the disorders of a stricken intellect are never graver, and, so to speak, more incurable, than when they result from a profound trouble of the soul.

He persevered unceasingly, because he counted on an auxiliary which shows itself always skillful in relieving grief,—time, which effaces all, and which alone is eternal in the midst of our passing pleasures and sorrows. He desired to combine distraction and study with it; he summoned the arts to the relief of the invalid, the arts

which she had forgotten, but the impression of which did not fail to reawaken more powerfully than ever in her admirable organization.

To learn, said a philosopher, is perhaps to remember. For her was this saying invented. Her first lesson overcame the hearers with astonishment and admiration, with enthusiasm, with fanaticism. Her success extended with rapidity; the intoxication which she evoked gained over her. There are privileged natures for whom glory makes amends for happiness, and this compensation has been marvelously reserved for them by Providence, for happiness and glory are found rarely combined.

At last she grew well, and was in a condition to tell her benefactor what I have here recited. But the return of her reason would have been for her only a new misfortune, if she had not recovered at the same time the resources of her talent. You may readily imagine that she did not lack for offers, as soon as it was learned that she had decided to devote herself to the theater. Ten different cities threatened to deprive us of her, when Bascara happened to see her and engaged her in his troupe.

"In Bascara's troupe!" I cried, laughing. "Rest assured that she now knows what to think of the redoubtable conspirators of the Castle of Ghismondo."

"That's what you are going to let us understand," replied Pablo, "for you seem to be extremely conversant with these mysteries. Speak, I beg you."

"We can't know about it," said Estelle in a piqued tone. "It's a secret which can't be told to anyone."

"That was true only a moment ago," I replied, "but this moment has worked a great change in my ideas and in my resolutions. I have just been absolved from my oath."

. . . . . .

I need not tell you that I then recounted what I told you a month ago, and what you will readily dispense with hearing from me again, even if you haven't any recollection of my first story. I am not capable of making it attractive enough to bear repetition.

"You are at least a good enough logician," said the assistant prosecutor, "to draw some moral conclusion, and I declare that I would not give a straw for the most piquant story if it did not result in any profit to the mind. The good Perrault, your master, knew how to make his most ridiculous tales yield sound and grave morals."

"Alas!" I replied, raising my hands to heaven, "of whom are you talking now? Of one of the most transcendental geniuses who has enlightened mankind since the days of Homer! The romancers of my time, and even the concocters of tales, haven't the presumption to imitate him. I will tell you even, between ourselves, that they would consider themselves greatly humiliated by the comparison. What is necessary for them, my dear prosecutor, is the daily renown which one obtains with money, and money which one always manages to come by, well or ill, when one has renown.

"The moral, so requisite according to you, is the least of their concern. Nevertheless, since you wish it, I am going to end with an adage which I believe to be of my making, although it might be found elsewhere by diligent search, for there is nothing of which it might not be said:

To believe all is imbecile,
To deny all is madness.

"And, if that doesn't suit you, it will cost me little to borrow one from the Spaniards, so long as I am on their ground:

De las cosas mas seguras,
La mas segura es dudar.

"That is to say, dear Eudoxia, that, of all things most sure, the most sure is to doubt."

"To doubt, to doubt!" said Anastasia sadly. "A fine pleasure, doubting! Then there aren't any apparitions?"

"You go too far," I replied; "for my adage warns you there might be. I have never had the good luck to see

.em; but why may not that be reserved for a more complete and highly favored organization than mine?"

"A more complete and favored organization!" cried the assistant public prosecutor. "For an idiot! a fool!"

"Why not, my good prosecutor? Who has given me the measure of human intelligence? Who is the clever Popilius who has said to it: You shall not get out of this circle! If apparitions are falsehood, it is necessary to admit that there is no truth better accredited than this error. All centuries, all nations, all histories bear witness to them; and on what do you repose the notion of what is called truth, if it is not the evidence of histories, of nations, and of centuries?

"I have, besides, on this subject a manner of thinking which is all my own, and which you probably would find very strange, but from which I cannot depart: it is that man is incapable of inventing anything, or, to express it differently, invention with him is only an innate perception of real facts. What is science doing to-day? At each new discovery, it justifies, it authenticates, if one may express it thus, one of the pretended lies of Herodotus and Pliny.

"The fabulous giraffe struts in the King's Garden. I am one of those who incessantly expect the unicorn, dragons, griffins, manicores, and sagittaries no longer constitute a part of the living world, but Cuvier has recovered them all in the world of fossils. Everybody knows that the harpy was an enormous bat, and the poets have described it with a precision which would arouse the envy of Linnæus. As for this phenomenon of apparitions, of which we were speaking just now, and to which I gladly return——"

I was about to resume it in fact, and with long developments, for it is a matter on which there is much to be said, when I perceived that the assistant prosecutor had gone to sleep.

Honoré de Balzac

An Episode of the Terror

ON the 22d of January, 1793, towards eight o'clock in the evening, an old lady came down the steep street that comes to an end opposite the Church of Saint Laurent in the Faubourg Saint Martin. It had snowed so heavily all day long that the lady's footsteps were scarcely audible; the streets were deserted, and a feeling of dread, not unnatural amid the silence, was further increased by the whole extent of the Terror beneath which France was groaning in those days; what was more, the old lady so far had met no one by the way. Her sight had long been failing, so that the few foot passengers dispersed like shadows in the distance over the wide thoroughfare through the faubourg, were quite invisible to her by the light of the lanterns.

She had passed the end of the Rue des Morts, when she fancied that she could hear the firm, heavy tread of a man walking behind her. Then it seemed to her that she had heard that sound before, and dismayed by the idea of being followed, she tried to walk faster toward a brightly lit shop window, in the hope of verifying the suspicions which had taken hold of her mind.

So soon as she stood in the shaft of light that streamed out across the road, she turned her head suddenly, and caught sight of a human figure looming through the fog. The dim vision was enough for her. For one moment she reeled beneath an overpowering weight of dread, for she could not doubt any longer that the man had followed her the whole way from her own door; then the desire to escape from the spy gave her strength. Unable to think clearly, she walked twice as fast as before, as if it were possible to escape from a man, who, of course, could move much faster;

and for some minutes she fled on, till, reaching a pastry-cook's shop, she entered and sank rather than sat down upon a chair by the counter.

A young woman busy with embroidery looked up from her work at the rattling of the door-latch, and looked out through the square window-panes. She seemed to recognize the old-fashioned violet silk mantle, for she went at once to a drawer as if in search of something put aside for the new-comer.

Not only did this movement and the expression of the woman's face show a very evident desire to be rid as soon as possible of an unwelcome visitor, but she even permitted herself an impatient exclamation when the drawer proved to be empty. Without looking at the lady, she hurried from her desk into the back shop and called to her husband, who appeared at once.

"Wherever have you put——" she began mysteriously, glancing at the customer by way of finishing her question.

The pastry-cook could only see the old lady's head-dress, a huge black silk bonnet with knots of violet ribbon round it, but he looked at his wife as who would say, "Did you think I should leave such a thing as that lying about in your drawer?" and then vanished.

The old lady kept so still and silent that the shopkeeper's wife was surprised. She went back to her, and on a nearer view a sudden impulse of pity, blended perhaps with curiosity, got the better of her. The old lady's face was naturally pale; she looked as though she secretly practiced austerities; but it was easy to see that she was paler than usual from recent agitation of some kind. Her head-dress was so arranged as almost to hide hair that was white, no doubt with age, for there was not a trace of powder on the collar of her dress. The extreme plainness of her dress lent an air of austerity to her face, and her features were proud and grave. The manners and habits of people of condition were so different from those of other classes in former times that a noble was easily known, and the shopkeeper's wife felt per-

suaded that her customer was a *ci-devant,* and that she had been about the Court.

"Madame?" she began with involuntary respect, forgetting that the title was proscribed.

But the old lady made no answer. She was staring fixedly at the shop window as though some dreadful thing had taken shape against the panes. The pastry-cook came back at that moment and drew the lady from her musings, by holding out a little cardboard box wrapped in blue paper.

"What is the matter, citoyenne?" he asked.

"Nothing, nothing, my friends," she answered, in a gentle voice. She looked up at the man as she spoke, as if to thank him by a glance; but she saw the red cap on his head, and a cry broke from her. "Ah! *You* have betrayed me!" . . .

The man and his young wife replied by an indignant gesture, that brought the color to the old lady's face; perhaps she felt relief, perhaps she blushed for her suspicions.

"Forgive me!" she said, with a childlike sweetness in her tones. Then, drawing a gold louis from her pocket, she held it out to the pastry-cook. "That is the price agreed upon," she added.

There is a kind of want that is felt instinctively by those who know want. The man and his wife looked at one another, then at the elderly woman before them, and read the same thoughts in each other's eyes. That bit of gold was so plainly the last. Her hands shook a little as she held it out, looking at it sadly but ungrudgingly, as one who knows the full extent of the sacrifice. Hunger and penury had carved lines as easy to read in her face as the traces of asceticism and fear. There were vestiges of bygone splendor in her clothes. She was dressed in threadbare silk, a neat but well-worn mantle, and daintily mended lace,—in the rags of former grandeur, in short. The shopkeeper and his wife, drawn two ways by pity and self-interest, began by lulling their consciences with words.

"You seem very poorly, citoyenne——"

"Perhaps Madame might like to take something," the wife broke in.

"We have some very nice broth," added the pastry-cook.

"And it is so cold," continued his wife; "perhaps you caught a chill, Madame, on your way here. But you can rest and warm yourself a bit."

"We are not so black as the devil!" cried the man.

The kindly intention in the words and tones of the charitable couple won the old lady's confidence. She said that a strange man had been following her, and she was afraid to go home alone.

"Is that all?" returned he of the red bonnet; "wait for me, citoyenne."

He handed the gold coin to his wife, and then went out to put on his National Guard's uniform, impelled, thereto, by the idea of making some adequate return for the money; an idea that sometimes slips into a tradesman's head when he has been prodigiously overpaid for goods of no great value. He took up his cap, buckled on his sabre, and came out in full dress. But his wife had had time to reflect, and reflection, as not unfrequently happens, closed the hand that kindly intentions had opened. Feeling frightened and uneasy lest her husband might be drawn into something unpleasant, she tried to catch at the skirt of his coat, to hold him back, but he, good soul, obeying his charitable first thought, brought out his offer to see the lady home, before his wife could stop him.

"The man of whom the citoyenne is afraid is still prowling about the shop it seems," she said sharply.

"I am afraid so," the lady said innocently.

"How if it is a spy? . . . a plot? . . . Don't go. And take the box away from her——"

The words whispered in the pastry-cook's ear cooled his hot fit of courage down to zero.

"Oh! I will just go out and say a word or two. I will rid you of him soon enough," he exclaimed, as he bounced out of the shop.

The old lady meanwhile, passive as a child and almost

dazed, sat down on her chair again. But the honest pastry-cook came back directly. A countenance red enough to begin with, and further flushed by the bake-house fire, was suddenly blanched; such terror perturbed him that he reeled as he walked, and stared about him like a drunken man.

"Miserable aristocrat! Do you want to have our heads cut off?" he shouted furiously. "You just take to your heels and never show yourself here again. Don't come to me for materials for your plots."

He tried, as he spoke, to take away the little box which she had slipped into one of her pockets. But at the touch of a profane hand on her clothes, the stranger recovered youth and activity for a moment, preferring to face the dangers of the street with no protector save God, to the loss of the thing that she had just paid for. She sprang to the door, flung it open, and disappeared, leaving the husband and wife dumfounded and quaking with fright.

Once outside in the street, she started away at a quick walk; but her strength soon failed her. She heard the sound of the snow crunching under a heavy step, and knew that the pitiless spy was on her track. She was obliged to stop. He stopped likewise. From sheer terror, or lack of intelligence, she did not dare to speak or look at him. She went slowly on; the man slackened his pace and fell behind so that he could still keep her in sight. He might have been her very shadow.

Nine o'clock struck as the silent man and woman passed again by the Church of Saint Laurent. It is in the nature of things that calm must succeed to violent agitation, even in the weakest soul; for if feeling is infinite, our capacity to feel is limited. So, as the stranger lady met with no harm from her supposed persecutor, she tried to look upon him as an unknown friend anxious to protect her. She thought of all the circumstances in which the stranger had appeared, and put them together, as if to find some ground for this comforting theory, and felt inclined to credit him with good intentions rather than bad.

Forgetting the fright that he had given the pastry-cook,

she walked on with a firmer step through the upper end of the Faubourg Saint Martin; and another half-hour's walk brought her to a house at the corner where the road to the Barrière de Pantin turns off from the main thoroughfare. Even at this day, the place is one of the least frequented parts of Paris. The north wind sweeps over the Buttes-Chaumont and Belleville, and whistles through the houses (the hovels rather), scattered over an almost uninhabited low-lying waste, where the fences are heaps of earth and bones. It was a desolate-looking place, a fitting refuge for despair and misery.

The sight of it appeared to make an impression upon the relentless pursuer of a poor creature so daring as to walk alone at night through the silent streets. He stood in thought, and seemed by his attitude to hesitate. She could see him dimly now, under the street lamp that sent a faint, flickering light through the fog. Fear gave her eyes. She saw, or thought she saw, something sinister about the stranger's features. Her old terrors awoke; she took advantage of a kind of hesitation on his part, slipped through the shadows to the door of the solitary house, pressed a spring, and vanished swiftly as a phantom.

For awhile the stranger stood motionless, gazing up at the house. It was in some sort a type of the wretched dwellings in the suburb: a tumble-down hovel, built of rough stones, daubed over with a coat of yellowish stucco, and so riven with great cracks that there seemed to be danger lest the slightest puff of wind might blow it down. The roof, covered with brown moss-grown tiles, had given way in several places, and looked as though it might break down altogether under the weight of the snow. The frames of the three windows on each story were rotten with damp and warped by the sun; evidently the cold must find its way inside. The house standing thus quite by itself looked like some old tower that Time had forgotten to destroy. A faint light shone from the attic windows pierced at irregular distances in the roof; otherwise the whole building was in total darkness.

Meanwhile the old lady climbed not without difficulty up the rough, clumsily built staircase, with a rope by way of a hand-rail. At the door of the lodging in the attic she stopped and tapped mysteriously; an old man brought forward a chair for her. She dropped into it at once.

"Hide! hide!" she exclaimed, looking up at him. "Seldom as we leave the house, everything that we do is known, and every step is watched——"

"What is it now?" asked another elderly woman, sitting by the fire.

"The man that has been prowling about the house yesterday and to-day, followed me to-night——"

At those words all three dwellers in the wretched den looked in each other's faces and did not try to dissimulate the profound dread that they felt. The old priest was the least overcome, probably because he ran the greatest danger. If a brave man is weighed down by great calamities or the yoke of persecution, he begins, as it were, by making the sacrifice of himself; and thereafter every day of his life becomes one more victory snatched from fate. But from the way in which the women looked at him it was easy to see that their intense anxiety was on his account.

"Why should our faith in God fail us, my sisters?" he said, in low but fervent tones. "We sang His praises through the shrieks of murderers and their victims at the Carmelites. If it was His will that I should come alive out of that butchery, it was, no doubt, because I was reserved for some fate which I am bound to endure without murmuring. God will protect His own; He can do with them according to His will. It is for you, not for me that we must think."

"No," answered one of the women. "What is our life compared with a priest's life?"

"Once outside the Abbaye de Chelles, I look upon myself as dead," added the nun who had not left the house, while the Sister that had just returned, held out the little box to the priest.

"Here are the wafers . . . but I can hear someone coming up the stairs!"

At this, the three began to listen. The sound ceased.

"Do not be alarmed if somebody tries to come in," said the priest. "Somebody on whom we could depend was to make all necessary arrangements for crossing the frontier. He is to come for the letters that I have written to the Duc de Langeais and the Marquis de Beauséant, asking them to find some way of taking you out of this dreadful country, and away from the death or the misery that waits for you here."

"But are you not going to follow us?" the nuns cried under their breath, almost despairingly.

"My post is here where the sufferers are," the priest said simply, and the women said no more, but looked at their guest in reverent admiration. He turned to the nun with the wafers.

"Sister Marthe," he said, "the messenger will say *Fiat Voluntas* in answer to the word *Hosanna*."

"There is someone on the stairs!" cried the other nun, opening a hiding-place contrived in the roof.

This time it was easy to hear, amid the deepest silence, a sound echoing up the staircase: it was a man's tread on the steps covered with dried lumps of mud. With some difficulty the priest slipped into a kind of cupboard, and the nun flung some clothes over him.

"You can shut the door, Sister Agathe," he said in a muffled voice.

He was scarcely hidden before three raps sounded on the door. The holy women looked into each other's eyes for counsel, and dared not say a single word.

They seemed both to be about sixty years of age. They had lived out of the world for forty years, and had grown so accustomed to the life of the convent that they could scarcely imagine any other. To them, as to plants kept in a hot-house, a change of air meant death. And so, when the grating was broken down one morning, they knew with a shudder that they were free. The effect produced by

the Revolution upon their simple souls is easy to imagine; it produced a temporary imbecility not natural to them. They could not bring the ideas learned in the convent into harmony with life and its difficulties; they could not even understand their own position. They were like children whom others have always cared for, deserted by their maternal providence. And as a child cries, they betook themselves to prayer. Now, in the presence of imminent danger, they were mute and passive, knowing no defense save Christian resignation.

The man at the door, taking silence for consent, presented himself, and the women shuddered. This was the prowler that had been making inquiries about them for some time past. But they looked at him with frightened curiosity, much as shy children stare silently at a stranger; and neither of them moved.

The newcomer was a tall, burly man. Nothing in his behavior, bearing, or expression suggested malignity, as following the example set by the nuns, he stood motionless, while his eyes traveled round the room.

Two straw mats laid upon planks did duty as beds. On the one table, placed in the middle of the room, stood a brass candlestick, several plates, three knives, and a round loaf. A small fire burned in the grate. A few bits of wood in a heap in a corner bore further witness to the poverty of the recluses. You had only to look at the coating of paint on the walls to discover the bad condition of the roof, and the ceiling was a perfect network of brown stains made by rain-water. A relic, saved no doubt from the wreck of the Abbaye de Chelles, stood like an ornament on the chimney-piece. Three chairs, two boxes, and a rickety chest of drawers completed the list of furniture, but a door beside the fireplace suggested an inner room beyond.

The brief inventory was soon made by the personage introduced into their midst under such terrible auspices. It was with a compassionate expression that he turned to the two women; he looked benevolently at them, and seemed at least as much embarrassed as they. But the strange silence

did not last long, for presently the stranger began to understand. He saw how inexperienced, how helpless (mentally speaking), the two poor creatures were, and he tried to speak gently.

"I am far from coming as an enemy, citoyennes——" he began. Then he suddenly broke off and went on, "Sisters, if anything should happen to you, believe me, I shall have no share in it. I have come to ask a favor of you."

Still the women were silent.

"If I am annoying you—if—if I am intruding, speak freely, and I will go; but you must understand that I am entirely at your service; that if I can do anything for you, you need not fear to make use of me. I, and I only, perhaps, am above the law, since there is no King now."

There was such a ring of sincerity in the words that Sister Agathe hastily pointed to a chair as if to bid their guest be seated. Sister Agathe came of the house of Langeais; her manner seemed to indicate that once she had been familiar with brilliant scenes, and had breathed the air of courts. The stranger seemed half pleased, half distressed when he understood her invitation; he waited to sit down until the women were seated.

"You are giving shelter to a reverend father who refused to take the oath, and escaped the massacres at the Carmelites by a miracle——"

"*Hosanna!*" Sister Agathe exclaimed eagerly, interrupting the stranger, while she watched him with curious eyes.

"That is not the name, I think," he said.

"But, Monsieur," Sister Marthe broke in quickly, "we have no priest here, and——"

"In that case you should be more careful and on your guard," he answered gently, stretching out his hand for a breviary that lay on the table. "I do not think that you know Latin, and——"

He stopped; for, at the sight of the great emotion in the faces of the two poor nuns, he was afraid that he had gone too far. They were trembling, and the tears stood in their eyes.

"Do not fear," he said with frankness. "I know your names and the name of your guest. Three days ago I heard of your distress and devotion to the venerable Abbé de——"

"Hush!" Sister Agathe cried, in the simplicity of her heart, as she laid her finger on her lips.

"You see, Sisters, that if I had conceived the horrible idea of betraying you, I could have given you up already, more than once——"

At the words the priest came out of his hiding-place and stood in their midst.

"I cannot believe, Monsieur, that you can be one of our persecutors," he said, addressing the stranger, "and I trust you. What do you want with me?"

The priest's holy confidence, the nobleness expressed in every line in his face, would have disarmed a murderer. For a moment the mysterious stranger, who had brought an element of excitement into lives of misery and resignation, gazed at the little group; then he turned to the priest and said, as if making a confidence, "Father, I came to beg you to celebrate a mass for the repose of the soul of—of—of an august personage whose body will never rest in consecrated earth——"

Involuntarily the abbé shivered. As yet, neither of the Sisters understood of whom the stranger was speaking; they sat with their heads stretched out and faces turned toward the speaker, curiosity in their whole attitude. The priest, meanwhile, was scrutinizing the stranger; there was no mistaking the anxiety in the man's face, the ardent entreaty in his eyes.

"Very well," returned the abbé. "Come back at midnight. I shall be ready to celebrate the only funeral service that it is in our power to offer in expiation of the crime of which you speak."

A quiver ran through the stranger, but a sweet yet sober satisfaction seemed to prevail over a hidden anguish. He took his leave respectfully, and the three generous souls felt his unspoken gratitude.

Two hours later, he came back and tapped at the garret door. Mademoiselle de Beauséant showed the way into the second room in their humble lodging. Everything had been made ready. The Sisters had moved the old chest of drawers between the two chimneys, and covered its quaint outlines over with a splendid altar cloth of green watered silk.

The bare walls looked all the barer, because the one thing that hung there was the great ivory and ebony crucifix, which of necessity attracted the eyes. Four slender little altar candles, which the Sisters had contrived to fasten into their places with sealing-wax, gave a faint pale light, almost absorbed by the walls; the rest of the room lay well-nigh in the dark. But the dim brightness, concentrated upon the holy things, looked like a ray from Heaven shining down upon the unadorned shrine. The floor was reeking with damp. An icy wind swept in through the chinks here and there, in a roof that rose sharply on either side, after the fashion of attic roofs. Nothing could be less imposing; yet perhaps, too, nothing could be more solemn than this mournful ceremony. A silence so deep that they could have heard the faintest sound of a voice on the Route d'Allemagne, invested the night-piece with a kind of somber majesty; while the grandeur of the service—all the grander for the strong contrast with the poor surroundings—produced a feeling of reverent awe.

The Sisters kneeling on either side of the altar, regardless of the deadly chill from the wet brick floor, were engaged in prayer, while the priest, arrayed in pontifical vestments, brought out a golden chalice set with gems; doubtless one of the sacred vessels saved from the pillage of the Abbaye de Chelles. Beside a ciborium, the gift of royal munificence, the wine and water for the holy sacrifice of the mass stood ready in two glasses such as could scarcely be found in the meanest tavern. For want of a missal, the priest had laid his breviary on the altar, and a common earthenware plate was set for the washing of hands that were pure and undefiled with blood. It was all so infinitely great, yet so

little, poverty-stricken yet noble, a mingling of sacred and profane.

The stranger came forward reverently to kneel between the two nuns. But the priest had tied crape round the chalice and the crucifix, having no other way of marking the mass as a funeral service; it was as if God himself had been in mourning. The man suddenly noticed this, and the sight appeared to call up some overwhelming memory, for great drops of sweat stood out on his broad forehead.

Then the four silent actors in the scene looked mysteriously at one another; and their souls in emulation seemed to stir and communicate the thoughts within them until all were melted into one feeling of awe and pity. It seemed to them that the royal martyr whose remains had been consumed with quicklime, had been called up by their yearning and now stood, a shadow in their midst, in all the majesty of a king. They were celebrating an anniversary service for the dead whose body lay elsewhere. Under the disjointed laths and tiles, four Christians were holding a funeral service without a coffin, and putting up prayers to God for the soul of a King of France. No devotion could be purer than this. It was a wonderful act of faith achieved without an afterthought. Surely in the sight of God it was like the cup of cold water which counterbalances the loftiest virtues. The prayers put up by two feeble nuns and a priest represented the whole Monarchy, and possibly at the same time, the Revolution found expression in the stranger, for the remorse in his face was so great that it was impossible not to think that he was fulfilling the vows of a boundless repentance.

When the priest came to the Latin words, *Introïbo ad altare Dei* a sudden divine inspiration flashed upon him; he looked at the three kneeling figures, the representatives of Christian France, and said instead, as though to blot out the poverty of the garret, " We are about to enter the Sanctuary of God!"

Those words, uttered with thrilling earnestness, struck reverent awe into the nuns and the stranger. Under the vaulted roof of St. Peter's at Rome, God would not have

revealed Himself in greater majesty than here for the eyes of the Christians in that poor refuge; so true is it that all intermediaries between God and the soul of man are superfluous, and all the grandeur of God proceeds from Himself alone.

The stranger's fervor was sincere. One emotion blended the prayers of the four servants of God and the King in a single supplication. The holy words rang like the music of heaven through the silence. At one moment, tears gathered in the stranger's eyes. This was during the *Pater Noster;* for the priest added a petition in Latin, and his audience doubtless understood him when he said: *"Et remitte scelus regicidis sicut Ludovicus eis remisit semetipse"*—forgive the regicides as Louis himself forgave them.

The Sisters saw two great tears trace a channel down the stranger's manly cheeks and fall to the floor. Then the office for the dead was recited; the *Domine salvum fac regem* chanted in an undertone that went to the hearts of the faithful Royalists, for they thought how the child-King for whom they were praying was even then a captive in the hands of his enemies; and a shudder ran through the stranger, as he thought that a new crime might be committed, and that he could not choose but take his part in it.

The service came to an end. The priest made a sign to the Sisters, and they withdrew. As soon as he was left alone with the stranger, he went toward him with a grave, gentle face, and said, in fatherly tones:—

"My son, if your hands are stained with the blood of the royal martyr, confide in me. There is no sin that may not be blotted out in the sight of God by penitence as sincere and touching as yours appears to be."

At the first words, the man started with terror, in spite of himself. Then he recovered composure, and looked quietly at the astonished priest.

"Father," he said, and the other could not miss the tremor in his voice, "no one is more guiltless than I of the blood shed——"

"I am bound to believe you," said the priest. He paused a moment, and again he scrutinized his penitent. But, persisting in the idea that the man before him was one of the members of the Convention, one of the timorous voters who betrayed an inviolable and anointed head to save their own, he began again gravely:—

"Remember, my son, that it is not enough to have taken no active part in the great crime; that fact does not absolve you. The men who might have defended the King and left their swords in their scabbards, will have a very heavy account to render to the King of Heaven—Ah! yes," he added, with an eloquent shake of the head, "heavy indeed! —for by doing nothing they became accomplices in the awful wickedness——"

"But do you think that an indirect participation will be punished?" the stranger asked with a bewildered look. "There is the private soldier commanded to fall into line—is he actually responsible?"

The priest hesitated. The stranger was glad; he had put the Royalist precisian in a dilemma, between the dogma of passive obedience on the one hand (for the upholders of the Monarchy maintained that obedience was the first principle of military law), and the equally important dogma which turns respect for the person of a King into a matter of religion. In the priest's indecision he was eager to see a favorable solution of the doubts which seemed to torment him. To prevent too prolonged reflection on the part of the reverend Jansenist, he added:—

"I should blush to offer remuneration of any kind for the funeral service which you have just performed for the repose of the King's soul and the relief of my conscience. The only possible return for something of inestimable value is an offering likewise beyond price. Will you deign, Monsieur, to take my gift of a holy relic? A day will perhaps come when you will understand its value."

As he spoke the stranger held out a box; it was very small and exceedingly light. The priest took it mechanically, as it were, so astonished was he by the man's solemn

words, the tones of his voice, and the reverence with which he held out his gift.

The two men went back together into the first room. The Sisters were waiting for them.

"This house that you are living in belongs to Mucius Scævola, the plasterer on the first floor," he said. "He is well known in the Section for his patriotism, but in reality he is an adherent of the Bourbons. He used to be a huntsman in the service of his Highness the Prince de Conti, and he owes everything to him. So long as you stay in the house, you are safer here than anywhere else in France. Do not go out. Pious souls will minister to your necessities, and you can wait in safety for better times. Next year, on the 21st of January,"—he could not hide an involuntary shudder as he spoke,—"next year, if you are still in this dreary refuge, I will come back again to celebrate the expiatory mass with you——"

He broke off, bowed to the three, who answered not a word, gave a last look at the garret with its signs of poverty, and vanished.

Such an adventure possessed all the interest of a romance in the lives of the innocent nuns. So, as soon as the venerable abbé told them the story of the mysterious gift, it was placed upon the table, and by the feeble light of the tallow dip an indescribable curiosity appeared in the three anxious faces. Mademoiselle de Langeais opened the box, and found a very fine lawn handkerchief, soiled with sweat; darker stains appeared as they unfolded it.

"That is blood!" exclaimed the priest.

"It is marked with a royal crown!" cried Sister Agathe.

The women, aghast, allowed the precious relic to fall. For their simple souls the mystery that hung about the stranger grew inexplicable; as for the priest, from that day forth he did not even try to understand it.

Before very long the prisoners knew that, in spite of the Terror, some powerful hand was extended over them. It began when they received firewood and provisions; and next

the Sisters knew that a woman had lent counsel to their protector, for linen was sent to them, and clothes in which they could leave the house without causing remark upon the aristocrat's dress that they had been forced to wear. After a while Mucius Scævola gave them two civic cards; and often and often tidings necessary for the priest's safety came to them in roundabout ways. Warnings and advice reached them so opportunely that they could only have been sent by some person in the possession of state secrets. And, at a time when famine threatened Paris, invisible hands brought rations of "white bread" for the proscribed women in the wretched garret. Still they fancied that Citizen Mucius Scævola was only the mysterious instrument of a kindness always ingenious, and no less intelligent.

The noble ladies in the garret could no longer doubt that their protector was the stranger of the expiatory mass on the night of the 22d of January, 1793; and a kind of cult of him sprang up among them. Their one hope was in him; they lived through him. They added special petitions for him to their prayers; night and morning the pious souls prayed for his happiness, his prosperity, his safety; entreating God to remove all snares far from his path, to deliver him from his enemies, to grant him a long and peaceful life. And with this daily renewed gratitude, as it may be called, there blended a feeling of curiosity which grew more lively day by day. They talked over the circumstances of his first sudden appearance, their conjectures were endless; the stranger had conferred one more benefit upon them by diverting their minds. Again, and again, they said, when he next came to see them as he promised, to celebrate the sad anniversary of the death of Louis XVI, he should not escape their friendship.

The night so impatiently awaited came at last. At midnight the old wooden staircase echoed with the stranger's heavy footsteps. They had made the best of their room for his coming; the altar was ready, and this time the door stood open, and the two Sisters were out at the stairhead, eager to light the way. Mademoiselle de Langeais even

came down a few steps, to meet their benefactor the sooner.

"Come," she said, with a quaver in the affectionate tones, "come in; we are expecting you."

He raised his face, gave her a dark look, and made no answer. The Sister felt as if an icy mantle had fallen over her, and said no more. At the sight of him, the glow of gratitude and curiosity died away in their hearts. Perhaps he was not so cold, not so taciturn, not so stern as he seemed to them, for in their highly wrought mood they were ready to pour out their feeling of friendship. But the three poor prisoners understood that he wished to be a stranger to them; and submitted. The priest fancied that he saw a smile on the man's lips as he saw their preparations for his visit, but it was at once repressed. He heard mass, said his prayer, and then disappeared, declining with a few polite words Mademoiselle de Langeais's invitation to partake of the little collation made ready for him.

After the 9th Thermidor, the sisters and the Abbé de Marolles could go about Paris without the least danger. The first time that the abbé went out he walked to a perfumer's shop at the sign of *The Queen of Roses,* kept by the Citizen Ragon and his wife, court perfumers. The Ragons had been faithful adherents of the Royalist cause; it was through their means that the Vendéen leaders kept up a correspondence with the Princes and the Royalist Committee in Paris. The abbé, in the ordinary dress of the time, was standing on the threshold of the shop—which stood between Saint Roch and the Rue des Frondeurs—when he saw that the Rue Saint Honoré was filled with a crowd and he could not go out.

"What is the matter?" he asked Madame Ragon.

"Nothing," she said, "it is only the tumbril cart and the executioner going to the Place Louis XV. Ah! we used to see it often enough last year; but to-day, four days after the anniversary of the twenty-first of January, one does not feel sorry to see the ghastly procession."

"Why not?" asked the abbé. "That is not said like a Christian."

"Eh! but it is the execution of Robespierre's accomplices. They defended themselves as long as they could, but now it is their turn to go where they sent so many innocent people."

The crowd poured by like a flood. The abbé, yielding to an impulse of curiosity, looked up above the heads, and there in the tumbril stood the man who had heard mass in the garret three days ago.

"Who is it?" he asked; "who is the man with——"

"That is the headsman," answered M. Ragon, calling the executioner—the *exécuteur des hautes œuvres*—by the name he had borne under the Monarchy.

"Oh! my dear, my dear! M. l'Abbé is dying!" cried out old Madame Ragon. She caught up a flask of vinegar, and tried to restore the old priest to consciousness.

"He must have given me the handkerchief that the King used to wipe his brow on the way to his martyrdom," murmured he. ". . . Poor man! . . . There was a heart in the steel blade, when none was found in all France. . . ."

The perfumers thought that the poor abbé was raving.

PARIS, *January, 1831.*

Madame Firmiani

MANY tales, rich in situations, or made dramatic by the endless sport of chance, carry their plot in themselves, and can be related artistically or simply by any lips without the smallest loss of the beauty of the subject; but there are some incidents of human life to which only the accents of the heart can give life; there are certain anatomical details, so to speak, of which the delicacy appears only under the most skilful infusions of mind. Again, there are portraits which demand a soul, and are nothing without the more ethereal features of the responsive countenance. Finally, there are certain things which we know not how to say, or to depict, without I know not what unconceived harmonies that are under the influence of a day or an hour, of a happy

conjunction of celestial signs, or of some occult moral predisposition.

Such revelations as these are absolutely required for the telling of this simple story, in which I would fain interest some of those naturally melancholy and pensive souls which are fed on bland emotions. If the writer, like a surgeon by the side of a dying friend, has become imbued with a sort of respect for the subject he is handling, why should not the reader share this inexplicable feeling? Is it so difficult to throw one's self into that vague, nervous melancholy which sheds gray hues on all our surroundings, which is half an illness, though its languid suffering is sometimes a pleasure?

If you are thinking by chance of the dear friends you have lost; if you are alone, and it is night, or the day is dying, read this narrative; otherwise, throw the book aside, here. If you have never buried some kind aunt, an invalid or poor, you will not understand these pages. To some, they will be odorous as of musk; to others, they will be as colorless, as strictly virtuous as those of Florian. In short, the reader must have known the luxury of tears; must have felt the wordless grief of a memory that drifts lightly by, bearing a shade that is dear but remote; he must possess some of those remembrances that make us at the same time regret those whom the earth has swallowed, and smile over vanished joys.

And now the author would have you believe that for all the wealth of England he would not extort from poetry even one of her fictions to add grace to this narrative. This is a true story, on which you may pour out the treasure of your sensibilities, if you have any.

In these days our language has as many dialects as there are men in the great human family. And it is a really curious and interesting thing to listen to the different views or versions of one and the same thing, or event, as given by the various species which make up the monograph of the Parisian—the Parisian being taken as a generic term. Thus you might ask a man of the matter-of-fact type, "Do you know Madame Firmiani?" and this man would interpret

Madame Firmiani by such an inventory as this: "A large house in the Rue du Bac, rooms handsomely furnished, fine pictures, a hundred thousand francs a year in good securities, and a husband who was formerly receiver-general in the department of Montenotte." Having thus spoken, your matter-of-fact man—stout and roundabout, almost always dressed in black—draws up his lower lip, so as to cover the upper lip, and nods his head, as much as to say, "Very respectable people, there is nothing to be said against them." Ask him no more. Your matter-of-fact people state everything in figures, dividends or real estate—a great word in their dictionary.

Turn to your right, go and question that young man, who belongs to the lounger species, and repeat your inquiry.

"Madame Firmiani?" says he. "Yes, yes, I know her very well. I go to her evenings. She receives on Wednesdays; a very good house to know." Madame Firmiani is already metamorphosed into a house. The house is not a mere mass of stone architecturally put together; no, this word, in the language of the lounger, has no equivalent. And here your lounger, a dry-looking man, with a pleasant smile, saying clever nothings, but always with more acquired wit than natural wit, bends to your ear, and says with a knowing air: "I never saw Monsieur Firmiani. His social position consists in managing estates in Italy. But Madame Firmiani is French, and spends her income as a Parisian should. She gives excellent tea! It is one of the few houses where you really can amuse yourself, and where everything they give you is exquisite. It is very difficult to get introduced, and the best society is to be seen in her drawing-rooms." Then the lounger emphasizes his last words by gravely taking a pinch of snuff; he applies it to his nose in little dabs, and seems to be saying: "I go to the house, but do not count on my introducing you."

To folks of this type Madame Firmiani keeps a sort of inn without a sign.

"Why on earth can you want to go to Madame Firmiani's? It is as dull there as it is at Court. Of what use

are brains if they do not keep you out of such drawing-rooms, where, with poetry such as is now current, you hear the most trivial little ballad just hatched out."

You have asked one of your friends who comes under the class of petty autocrats—men who would like to have the universe under lock and key, and have nothing done without their leave. They are miserable at other people's enjoyment, can forgive nothing but vice, wrong-doing, and infirmities, and want nothing but protégés. Aristocrats by taste, they are republicans out of spite, simply to discover many inferiors among their equals.

"Oh, Madame Firmiani, my dear fellow, is one of those adorable women whom Nature feels to be a sufficient excuse for all the ugly ones she has created by mistake; she is bewitching, she is kind! I should like to be in power, to be king, to have millions of money, solely [and three words are whispered in your ear]. Shall I introduce you to her?"

This young man is a schoolboy, known for his audacious bearing among men, and his extreme shyness in private.

"Madame Firmiani!" cries another, twirling his cane in the air. "I will tell you what I think of her. She is a woman of between thirty and thirty-five, face a little *passée,* fine eyes, a flat figure, a worn contralto voice, dresses a great deal, rouges a little, manners charming; in short, my dear fellow, the remains of a pretty woman which are still worthy of a passion."

This verdict is pronounced by a specimen of the genus Coxcomb, who, having just breakfasted, does not weigh his words, and is going out riding. At such moments a coxcomb is pitiless.

"She has a collection of magnificent pictures in her house. Go and see her," says another; "nothing can be finer."

You have come upon the species Amateur. This individual quits you to go to Pérignon's, or to Tripet's. To him Madame Firmiani is a number of painted canvases.

A Wife.—"Madame Firmiani? I will not have you go there." This phrase is the most suggestive view of all.—Madame Firmiani! A dangerous woman! A siren! She

dresses well, has good taste; she spoils the night's rest of every wife.—The speaker is of the species Shrew.

An Attaché to an Embassy.—"Madame Firmiani? From Antwerp, is not she? I saw that woman, very handsome, about ten years ago. She was then at Rome."

Men of the order of Attachés have a mania for utterances à la Talleyrand, their wit is often so subtle that their perception is imperceptible. They are like those billiard-players who miss the balls with infinite skill. These men are not generally great talkers; but when they talk it is of nothing less than Spain, Vienna, Italy, or Saint-Petersburg. The names of contries act on them like springs; you press them, and the machinery plays all its tunes.

"Does not that Madame Firmiani see a great deal of the Faubourg Saint-Germain?" This is asked by a person who desires claims to distinction. She adds a *de* to everybody's name—to Monsieur Dupin, senior, to Monsieur Lafayette; she flings it right and left and spatters people with it. She spends her life in anxieties as to what is *correct*; but, for her sins, she lives in the unfashionable Marais, and her husband was an attorney—but an attorney in the King's Court.

"Madame Firmiani, Monsieur? I do not know her." This man is of the class of Dukes. He recognizes no woman who has not been presented. Excuse him; he was created Duke by Napoleon.

"Madame Firmiani? Was she not a singer at the Italian opera house?"—A man of the genus Simpleton. The individuals of this genus must have an answer to everything. They would rather speak calumnies than be silent.

Two Old Ladies (*the wives of retired lawyers*). The First (she has a cap with bows of ribbon, her face is wrinkled, her nose sharp; she holds a prayer-book, and her voice is harsh).—"What was her maiden name?—this Madame Firmiani?"

The Second (she has a little red face like a lady-apple, and a gentle voice).—"She was a Cadignan, my dear, niece

of the old Prince de Cadignan, and cousin, consequently, to the Duc de Maufrigneuse."

Madame Firmiani then is a Cadignan. Bereft of virtues, fortune, and youth, she would still be a Cadignan; that, like a prejudice, is always rich and living.

An Eccentric.—"My dear fellow, I never saw any clogs in her ante-room; you may go to her house without compromising yourself, and play there without hesitation; for if there should be any rogues, they will be people of quality, consequently there is no quarreling."

An Old Man of the Species Observer.—"You go to Madame Firmiani's, my dear fellow, and you find a handsome woman lounging indolently by the fire. She will scarcely move from her chair; she rises only to greet women, or ambassadors, or dukes—people of importance. She is very gracious, she charms you, she talks well, and likes to talk of everything. She bears every indication of a passionate soul, but she is credited with too many adorers to have a lover. If suspicion rested on only two or three intimate visitors, we might know which was her *cavaliere servente*. But she is all mystery; she is married, and we have never seen her husband; Monsieur Firmiani is purely a creature of fancy, like the third horse we are made to pay for when traveling post, and which we never see; Madame, if you believe the professionals, has the finest contralto voice in Europe, and has not sung three times since she came to Paris; she receives numbers of people, and goes nowhere."

The Observer speaks as an oracle. His words, his anecdotes, his quotations must all be accepted as truth, or you risk being taken for a man without knowledge of the world, without capabilities. He will slander you lightly in twenty drawing-rooms, where he is as essential as the first piece in the bill—pieces so often played to the benches, but which once upon a time were successful. The Observer is a man of forty, never dines at home, and professes not to be dangerous to women; he wears powder and a maroon-colored coat; he can always have a seat in various boxes at the Théâtre des Bouffons. He is sometimes mistaken for

a parasite, but he has held too high positions to be suspected of sponging, and, indeed, possesses an estate, in a department of which the name has never leaked out.

"Madame Firmiani? Why, my dear boy, she was a mistress of Murat's." This gentleman is a Contradictory. They supply the errata to every memory, rectify every fact, bet you a hundred to one, are cock-sure of everything. You catch them out in a single evening in flagrant delicts of ubiquity. They assert that they were in Paris at the time of Mallet's conspiracy, forgetting that half an hour before they had crossed the Beresina. The Contradictories are almost all members of the Legion of Honor; they talk very loud, have receding foreheads, and play high.

"Madame Firmiani, a hundred thousand francs a year? Are you mad? Really some people scatter thousands a year with the liberality of authors, to whom it costs nothing to give their heroines handsome fortunes. But Madame Firmiani is a flirt who ruined a young fellow the other day, and hindered him from making a very good marriage. If she were not handsome, she would be penniless."

This speaker you recognize: he is one of the Envious, and we will not sketch his least future. The species is as well known as that of the domestic *felis*. How is the perpetuity of envy to be explained? A vice which is wholly unprofitable.

People of fashion, literary people, very good people, and people of every kind were, in the month of January, 1824, giving out so many different opinions on Madame Firmiani that it would be tiresome to report them all. We have only aimed at showing that a man wishing to know her, without choosing, or being able, to go to her house, would have been equally justified in the belief that she was a widow or a wife —silly or witty, virtuous or immoral, rich or poor, gentle or devoid of soul, handsome or ugly; in fact, there were as many Mesdames Firmiani as there are varieties in social life, or sects in the Catholic Church. Frightful thought! We are all like lithographed plates, of which an endless number of copies are taken off by slander. These copies

resemble or differ from the original by touches so imperceptibly slight that, but for the calumnies of our friends and the witticisms of newspapers, reputation would depend on the balance struck by each hearer between the limping truth and the lies to which Parisian wit lends wings.

Madame Firmiani, like many other women of dignity and noble pride, who close their hearts as a sanctuary and scorn the world, might have been very hardly judged by Monsieur de Bourbonne, an old gentleman of fortune, who had thought a good deal about her during the past winter. As it happened this gentleman belonged to the Provincial Land-owner class, folks who are accustomed to inquire into everything, and to make bargains with the peasants. In this business a man grows keen-witted in spite of himself, as a soldier, in the long run, acquires the courage of routine. This inquirer, a native of Touraine, and not easily satisfied by the Paris dialects, was a very honorable gentleman who rejoiced in a nephew, his sole heir, for whom he planted his poplars. Their more than natural affection gave rise to much evil-speaking, which individuals of the various species of Tourangeau formulated with mother wit; but it would be useless to record it; it would pale before that of Parisian tongues. When a man can think of his heir without displeasure as he sees fine rows of poplars improving every day, his affection increases with each spadeful of earth he turns at the foot of his trees. Though such phenomena of sensibility may be uncommon, they still are to be met with in Touraine.

This much-loved nephew, whose name was Octave de Camps, was descended from the famous Abbé de Camps, so well known to the learned, or to the bibliomaniacs, which is not the same thing.

Provincial folks have a disagreeable habit of regarding young men who sell their reversions with a sort of respectable horror. This Gothic prejudice is bad for speculation, which the Government has hitherto found it necessary to encourage. Now, without consulting his uncle, Octave had on a sudden disposed of an estate in favor of the speculative builders. The château of Villaines would have been de-

molished but for the offers made by his old uncle to the representatives of the demolishing fraternity. To add to the testator's wrath, a friend of Octave's, a distant relation, one of those cousins with small wealth and great cunning, who lead their prudent neighbors to say, "I should not like to go to law with him!" had called, by chance, on Monsieur de Bourbonne and informed him that his nephew was ruined. Monsieur Octave de Camps, after dissipating his fortune for a certain Madame Firmiani, and not daring to confess his sins, had been reduced to giving lessons in mathematics, pending his coming into his uncle's leavings. This distant cousin—a sort of Charles Moor—had not been ashamed of giving this disastrous news to the old country gentleman at the hour when, sitting before his spacious hearth, he was digesting a copious provincial dinner. But would-be legatees do not get rid of an uncle so easily as they could wish. This uncle, thanks to his obstinacy, refusing to believe the distant cousin, came out victorious over the indigestion brought on by the biography of his nephew. Some blows fall on the heart, others on the brain; the blow struck by the distant cousin fell on the stomach, and produced little effect, as the good man had a strong one.

Monsieur de Bourbonne, as a worthy disciple of Saint Thomas, came to Paris without telling Octave, and tried to get information as to his heir's insolvency. The old gentleman, who had friends in the Faubourg Saint-Germain—the Listomères, the Lenoncourts, and the Vandenesses—heard so much slander, so much that was true, and so much that was false concerning Madame Firmiani, that he determined to call on her, under the name of Monsieur de Rouxellay, the name of his place. The prudent old man took care, in going to study Octave's mistress—as she was said to be—to choose an evening when he knew the young man was engaged on work to be well paid for; for Madame Firmiani was always at home to her young friend, a circumstance that no one could account for. As to Octave's ruin, that, unfortunately, was no fiction.

Monsieur de Rouxellay was not at all like a stage uncle.

As an old musketeer, a man of the best society, who had had his successes in his day, he knew how to introduce himself with a courtly air, remembered the polished manners of the past, had a pretty wit, and understood almost all the rôle of nobility. Though he loved the Bourbons with noble frankness, believed in God as gentlemen believe, and read only the *Quotidienne,* he was by no means so ridiculous as the Liberals of his department would have wished. He could hold his own with men about the Court, so long as he was not expected to talk of *Mosé,* or the play, or romanticism, or local color, or railways. He had not got beyond Monsieur de Voltaire, Monsieur le Comte de Buffon, Peyronnet, and the Chevalier Gluck, the Queen's private musician.

"Madame," said he to the Marquise de Listomère, to whom he had given his arm to go into Madame Firmiani's room, "if this woman is my nephew's mistress, I pity her. How can she bear to live in the midst of luxury and know that he is in a garret? Has she no soul? Octave is a fool to have invested the price of the estate of Villaines in the heart of a——"

Monsieur de Bourbonne was of Fossil species, and spoke only the language of a past day.

"But suppose he had lost it at play?"

"Well, Madame, he would have had the pleasure of playing."

"You think he has had no pleasure for his money?—Look, here is Madame Firmiani."

The old uncle's brightest memories paled at the sight of his nephew's supposed mistress. His anger died in a polite speech wrung from him by the presence of Madame Firmiani. By one of those chances which come only to pretty women, it was a moment when all her beauties shone with particular brilliancy, the result, perhaps, of the glitter of waxlights, of an exquisitely simple dress, of an indefinable reflection from the elegance in which she lived and moved. Only long study of the pretty revolutions of an evening party in a Paris salon can enable one to appreciate the imperceptible shades that can tinge and change a woman's

face. There are moments when, pleased with her dress, feeling herself brilliant, happy at being admired, and seeing herself the queen of a room full of remarkable men all smiling at her, a Parisian is conscious of her beauty and grace; she grows the lovelier by all the looks she meets; they give her animation, but their mute homage is transmitted by subtle glances to the man she loves. In such a moment a woman is invested, as it were, with supernatural power, and becomes a witch, an unconscious coquette; she involuntarily inspires the passion which is a secret intoxication to herself, she has smiles and looks that are fascinating. If this excitement which comes from the soul lends attractiveness even to ugly women, with what splendor does it not clothe a naturally elegant creature, finely made, fair, fresh, bright-eyed, and, above all, dressed with such taste as artists and even her most spiteful rivals must admit.

Have you ever met, for your happiness, some woman whose harmonious tones give to her speech the charm that is no less conspicuous in her manners, who knows how to talk and to be silent, who cares for you with delicate feeling, whose words are happily chosen and her language pure? Her banter flatters you, her criticism does not sting; she neither preaches nor disputes, but is interested in leading a discussion, and stops it at the right moment. Her manner is friendly and gay, her politeness is unforced, her eagerness to please is not servile; she reduces respect to a mere gentle shade; she never tires you, and leaves you satisfied with her and yourself. You will see her gracious presence stamped on the things she collects about her. In her home everything charms the eye, and you breathe, as it seems, your native air. This woman is quite natural. You never feel an effort, she flaunts nothing, her feelings are expressed with simplicity because they are genuine. Though candid, she never wounds the most sensitive pride; she accepts men as God made them, pitying the vicious, forgiving defects and absurdities, sympathizing with every age, and vexed with nothing because she has the tact to forefend everything. At once tender and lively, she first constrains and then con-

soles you. You love her so truly, that if this angel does wrong, you are ready to justify her.—Then you have Madame Firmiani.

By the time old Bourbonne had talked with this woman for a quarter of an hour, sitting by her side, his nephew was absolved. He understood that, true or false, Octave's connection with Madame Firmiani no doubt covered some mystery. Returning to the illusions of his youth, and judging of Madame Firmiani's heart by her beauty, the old gentleman thought that a woman so sure of her dignity as she seemed, was incapable of a base action. Her black eyes spoke of so much peace of mind, the lines of her face were so noble, the forms so pure, and the passion of which she was accused seemed to weigh so little on her heart, that, as he admired all the pledges given to love and to virtue by that adorable countenance, the old man said to himself, "My nephew has committed some folly."

Madame Firmiani owned to twenty-five. But the Matter-of-facts could prove that, having been married in 1813 at the age of sixteen, she must be at least eight-and-twenty in 1825. Nevertheless the same persons declared that she had never at any period of her life been so desirable, so perfectly a woman. She had no children, and had never had any; the hypothetical Firmiani, a respectable man of forty in 1813, had, it was said, only his name and fortune to offer her. So Madame Firmiani had come to the age when a Parisian best understands what passion is, and perhaps longs for it innocently in her unemployed hours: she had everything that the world can sell, or lend, or give. The Attachés declared she knew everything, the Contradictories said she had yet many things to learn; the Observers noticed that her hands were very white, her foot very small, her movements a little too undulating; but men of every species envied or disputed Octave's good fortune, agreeing that she was the most aristocratic beauty in Paris.

Still young, rich, a perfect musician, witty, exquisite; welcomed, for the sake of the Cadignans, to whom she was related through her mother, by the Princesse de Blamont-

Chauvry, the oracle of the aristocratic quarter, beloved by her rivals the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse her cousin, the Marquise d'Espard, and Madame de Macumer, she flattered every vanity which feeds or excites love. And, indeed, she was the object of too many desires not to be the victim of fashionable detraction and those delightful calumnies which are wittily hinted behind a fan or in a whispered *aside*. Hence the remarks with which this story opened were necessary to mark the contrast between the real Firmiani and the Firmiani known to the world. Though some women forgave her for being happy, others could not overlook her respectability; now there is nothing so terrible, especially in Paris, as suspicion without foundation; it is impossible to kill it.

This sketch of a personality so admirable by nature can only give a feeble idea of it; it would need the brush of an Ingres to represent the dignity of the brow, the mass of fine hair, the majesty of the eyes, all the thoughts betrayed by the varying hues of the complexion. There was something of everything in this woman; poets could see in her both Joan of Arc and Agnes Sorel; but there was also the unknown woman—the soul hidden behind this deceptive mask—the soul of Eve, the wealth of evil and the treasures of goodness, wrong and resignation, crime and self-sacrifice —the Doña Julia and Haidee of Byron's *Don Juan*.

The old soldier very boldly remained till the last in Madame Firmiani's drawing-room; she found him quietly seated in an armchair, and staying with the pertinacity of a fly that must be killed to be got rid of. The clock marked two in the morning.

"Madame," said the old gentleman, just as Madame Firmiani rose in the hope of making her guest understand that it was her pleasure that he should go, "Madame, I am Monsieur Octave de Camps' uncle."

Madame Firmiani at once sat down again, and her agitation was evident. In spite of his perspicacity, the planter of poplars could not make up his mind whether shame or pleasure made her turn pale. There are pleasures which do

not exist without a little coy bashfulness—delightful emotions which the chastest soul would fain keep behind a veil. The more sensitive a woman is, the more she lives to conceal her soul's greatest joys. Many women, incomprehensible in their exquisite caprices, at times long to hear a name spoken by all the world, while they sometimes would sooner bury it in their hearts. Old Bourbonne did not read Madame Firmiani's agitation quite in this light; but forgive him; the country gentleman was suspicious.

"Indeed, Monsieur?" said Madame Firmiani, with one of those clear and piercing looks in which we men can never see anything, because they question us too keenly.

"Indeed, Madame; and do you know what I have been told—I, in the depths of the country? That my nephew has ruined himself for you; and the unhappy boy is in a garret, while you live here in gold and silks. You will, I hope, forgive my rustic frankness, for it may be useful to you to be informed of the slander."

"Stop, Monsieur," said Madame Firmiani, interrupting the gentleman with an imperious gesture; "I know all that. You are too polite to keep the conversation to this subject when I beg you to change it. You are too gallant, in the old-fashioned sense of the word," she added, with a slightly ironical emphasis, "not to acknowledge that you have no right to cross-question me. However, it is ridiculous in me to justify myself. I hope you have a good enough opinion of my character to believe in the utter contempt I feel for money, though I was married without any fortune whatever to a man who had an immense fortune. I do not know whether your nephew is rich or poor; if I have received him, if I still receive him, it is because I regard him as worthy to move in the midst of my friends. All my friends, Monsieur, respect each other; they know that I am not so philosophical as to entertain people whom I do not esteem. That, perhaps, shows a lack of charity; but my guardian angel has preserved in me, to this day, an intense aversion for gossip and dishonor."

Though her voice was not quite firm at the beginning of

this reply, the last words were spoken by Madame Firmiani with the cool decision of *Célimène* rallying the *Misanthrope*.

"Madame," the Count resumed in a broken voice, "I am an old man—I am almost a father to Octave—I therefore must humbly crave your pardon beforehand for the only question I shall be so bold as to ask you; and I give you my word of honor as a gentleman that your reply will die here," and he laid his hand on his heart with a really religious gesture. "Does gossip speak the truth; do you love Octave?"

"Monsieur," said she, "I should answer anyone else with a look. But you, since you are almost a father to Monsieur de Camps, you I will ask what you would think of a woman who, in reply to your question, should say, Yes. To confess one's love to the man we love—when he loves us—well, well; when we are sure of being loved for ever, believe me, Monsieur, it is an effort to us and a reward to him; but to any one else!——"

Madame Firmiani did not finish her sentence; she rose, bowed to the good gentleman, and vanished into her private rooms, where the sound of doors opened and shut in succession had language to the ears of the poplar planter.

"Damn it!" said he to himself, "what a woman! She is either a very cunning hussy or an angel;" and he went down to his hired fly in the courtyard, where the horses were pawing the pavement in the silence. The coachman was asleep, after having cursed his customer a hundred times.

Next morning, by about eight o'clock, the old gentleman was mounting the stairs of a house in the Rue de l'Observance, where dwelt Octave de Camps. If there was in this world a man amazed, it was the young professor on seeing his uncle. The key was in the door, Octave's lamp was still burning; he had sat up all night.

"Now, you rascal," said Monsieur de Bourbonne, seating himself in an armchair. "How long has it been the fashion to make fools (speaking mildly) of uncles who have twenty-six thousand francs a year in good land in Touraine? and

that, when you are sole heir? Do you know that formerly such relations were treated with respect? Pray, have you any fault to find with me? Have I bungled my business as an uncle? Have I demanded your respect? Have I ever refused you money? Have I shut my door in your face, saying you had only come to see how I was? Have you not the most accommodating, the least exacting uncle in France?—I will not say in Europe, it would be claiming too much. You write to me, or you don't write. I live on your professions of affection. I am laying out the prettiest estate in the neighborhood, a place that is the object of envy in all the department; but I do not mean to leave it you till the latest date possible—a weakness that is very pardonable? And my gentleman sells his property, is lodged like a groom, has no servants, keeps no style——"

"My dear uncle——"

"It is not a case of uncle, but of nephew. I have a right to your confidence; so have it all out at once; it is the easiest way, I know by experience. Have you been gambling? Have you been speculating on the Bourse? Come, say, 'Uncle, I am a wretch,' and we kiss and are friends. But if you tell me any lie bigger than those I told at your age, I will sell my property, buy an annuity, and go back to the bad ways of my youth, if it is not too late."

"Uncle——"

"I went last night to see your Madame Firmiani," said the uncle, kissing the tips of all his fingers together. "She is charming," he went on. "You have the king's warrant and approval, and your uncle's consent, if that is any satisfaction to you. As to the sanction of the Church, that I suppose is unnecessary—the sacraments, no doubt, are too costly. Come; speak out. Is it for her that you have ruined yourself?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Ah! the hussy! I would have bet upon it. In my day a woman of fashion could ruin a man more cleverly than any of your courtesans of to-day. I saw in her a resuscitation of the last century,"

"Uncle," said Octave, in a voice that was at once sad and gentle, "you are under a mistake. Madame Firmiani deserves your esteem, and all the adoration of her admirers."

"So hapless youth is always the same!" said Monsieur de Bourbonne. "Well, well! go on in your own way; tell me all the old stories once more. At the same time, you know, I dare say, that I am no chicken in such matters."

"My dear uncle, here is a letter which will explain everything," replied Octave, taking out an elegant lettercase—*her* gift, no doubt. "When you have read it I will tell you the rest, and you will know Madame Firmiani as the world knows her not."

"I have not got my spectacles," said his uncle. "Read it to me."

Octave began: "'My dear love——'"

"Then you are very intimate with this woman?"

"Why, yes, uncle."

"And you have not quarreled?"

"Quarreled!" echoed Octave in surprise. "We are married—at Gretna Green."

"Well, then, why do you dine for forty sous?"

"Let me proceed."

"Very true. I am listening."

Octave took up the letter again, and could not read certain passages without strong emotion.

"'My beloved husband, you ask me the reason of my melancholy. Has it passed from my soul into my face, or have you only guessed it? And why should you not? Our hearts are so closely united. Besides, I cannot lie, though that perhaps is a misfortune. One of the conditions of being loved is, in a woman, to be always caressing and gay. Perhaps I ought to deceive you; but I would not do so, not even if it were to increase or to preserve the happiness you give me—you lavish on me—under which you overwhelm me. Oh, my dear, my love carries with it so much gratitude! And I must love for ever, without measure. Yes, I must always be proud of you. Our glory—a woman's glory—is all in the man she loves. Esteem, consideration, honor,

are they not all his who has conquered everything? Well, and my angel has fallen. Yes, my dear, your last confession has dimmed my past happiness. From that moment I have felt myself humbled through you—you, whom I believed to be the purest of men, as you are the tenderest and most loving. I must have supreme confidence in your still childlike heart to make an avowal which costs me so dear. What, poor darling, your father stole his fortune, and you know it, and you keep it! And you could tell me of this attorney's triumph in a room full of the dumb witnesses of our love, and you are a gentleman, and you think yourself noble, and I am yours, and you are two-and-twenty! How monstrous all through!

"'I have sought excuses for you; I have ascribed your indifference to your giddy youth; I know there is still much of the child in you. Perhaps you have never yet thought seriously of what is meant by wealth, and by honesty. Oh, your laughter hurt me so much! Only think, there is a family, ruined, always in grief, girls perhaps, who curse you day by day, an old man who says to himself every night, "I should not lack bread if Monsieur de Camps' father had only been an honest man."'"

"What!" exclaimed Monsieur de Bourbonne, interrupting him, "were you such an idiot as to tell that woman the story of your father's affair with the Bourgneufs? Women better understand spending a fortune than making one——"

"They understand honesty. Let me go on, uncle!

"'Octave, no power on earth is authorized to garble the language of honor. Look into your conscience, and ask it by what name to call the action to which you owe your riches.'"

And the nephew looked at his uncle, who beat his head.

"'I will not tell you all the thoughts that beset me; they can all be reduced to one, which is this: I cannot esteem a man who knowingly soils himself for a sum of money whether large or small. Five francs stolen at play, or six times a hundred thousand francs obtained by legal trickery, disgrace a man equally. I must tell you all: I feel myself

sullied by a love which till now was all my joy. From the bottom of my soul there comes a voice I cannot stifle. I have wept to find that my conscience is stronger than my love. You might commit a crime, and I would hide you in my bosom from human justice if I could; but my devotion would go no further. Love, my dearest, is, in a woman, the most unlimited confidence, joined to I know not what craving to reverence and adore the being to whom she belongs. I have never conceived of love but as a fire in which the noblest feelings were yet further purified—a fire which develops them to the utmost.

"'I have but one thing more to say: Come to me poor, and I shall love you twice as much if possible; if not, give me up. If I see you no more, I know what is left to me to do.

"'But, now, understand me clearly, I will not have you make restitution because I desire it. Consult your conscience. This is an act of justice, and must not be done as a sacrifice to love. I am your wife, and not your mistress; the point is not to please me, but to inspire me with the highest esteem. If I have misunderstood, if you have not clearly explained your father's action, in short, if you can regard your fortune as legitimately acquired—and how gladly would I persuade myself that you deserve no blame—decide as the voice of conscience dictates; act wholly for yourself. A man who truly loves, as you love me, has too high a respect for all the holy inspirations he may get from his wife to be dishonorable.

"'I blame myself now for all I have written. A word would perhaps have been enough, and my preaching instinct has carried me away. So I should like to be scolded—not much, but a little. My dear, between you and me are not you the Power? You only should detect your own faults. Well, Master mine, can you say I understand nothing about political discussion?'"

"Well, uncle?" said Octave, whose eyes were full of tears.

"I see more writing, finish it."

"Oh, there is nothing further but such things as only a lover may read."

"Very good," said the old man. "Very good, my dear boy. I was popular with the women in my day; but I would have you to believe that I too have loved; *et ego in Arcadiâ*. Still, I cannot imagine why you give lessons in mathematics."

"My dear uncle, I am your nephew. Is not that as much as to say that I have made some inroads on the fortune left to me by my father? After reading that letter a complete revolution took place in me, in one instant I paid up the arrears of remorse. I could never describe to you the state in which I was. As I drove my cab to the Bois a voice cried to me, 'Is that horse yours?' As I ate my dinner, I said to myself, 'Have you not stolen the food?' I was ashamed of myself. My honesty was ardent in proportion to its youth. First I flew off to Madame Firmiani. Ah, my dear uncle, that day I had such joys of heart, such raptures of soul as were worth millions. With her I calculated how much I owed the Bourgneuf family; and I sentenced myself, against Madame Firmiani's advice, to pay them interest at the rate of three per cent. But my whole fortune was not enough to refund the sum. We were both of us lovers enough—husband and wife enough—for her to offer and for me to accept her savings——"

"What besides all her virtues, that adorable woman can save money!" cried the uncle.

"Do not laugh at her. Her position compels her to some thrift. Her husband went to Greece in 1820, and died about three years ago; but to this day it has been impossible to get legal proof of his death, or to lay hands on the will he no doubt made in favor of his wife; this important document was stolen, lost, or mislaid in a country where a man's papers are not kept as they are in France, nor is there a Consul. So, not knowing whether she may not some day have to reckon with other and malignant heirs, she is obliged to be extremely careful, for she does not wish to have to give up her wealth as Chateaubriand has just given

up the Ministry. Now I mean to earn a fortune that shall be mine, so as to restore my wife to opulence if she should be ruined."

"And you never told me—you never came to me. My dear nephew, believe me I love you well enough to pay your honest debts, your debts as a gentleman. I am the Uncle of the fifth act—I will be revenged."

"I know your revenges, uncle; but let me grow rich by my own toil. If you wish to befriend me, allow me a thousand crowns a year until I need capital for some business. I declare at this moment I am so happy that all I care about is to live. I give lessons that I may be no burden on anyone.

"Ah, if you could but know with what delight I made restitution. After making some inquiries I found the Bourgneufs in misery and destitution. They were living at Saint-Germain in a wretched house. The old father was manager in a lottery office; the two girls did the work of the house and kept the accounts. The mother was almost always ill. The two girls are charming, but they have learnt by bitter experience how little the world cares for beauty without fortune. What a picture did I find there! If I went to the house as the accomplice in a crime, I came out of it an honest man, and I have purged my father's memory. I do not judge him, uncle; there is in a lawsuit an eagerness, a passion which may sometimes blind the most honest man alive. Lawyers know how to legitimize the most preposterous claims; there are syllogisms in law to humor the errors of conscience, and judges have a right to make mistakes. My adventure was a perfect drama. To have played the part of Providence, to have fulfilled one of these hopeless wishes: 'If only twenty thousand francs a year could drop from heaven!'—a wish we all have uttered in jest; to see a sublime look of gratitude, amazement, and admiration take the place of a glance fraught with curses; to bring opulence into the midst of a family sitting round a turf fire in the evening, by the light of a wretched lamp—No, words cannot paint such a scene. My excessive justice

to them seemed unjust. Well, if there be a Paradise, my father must now be happy.—As for myself, I am loved as man was never loved before. Madame Firmiani has given me more than happiness; she has taught me a delicacy of feeling which perhaps I lacked. Indeed, I call her Dear Conscience, one of those loving names that are the outcome of certain secret harmonies of spirit. Honesty is said to pay; I hope ere long to be rich myself; at this moment I am bent on solving a great industrial problem, and if I succeed I shall make millions."

"My boy, you have your mother's soul," said the old man, hardly able to restrain the tears that rose at the remembrance of his sister.

At this instant, in spite of the height above the ground of Octave's room, the young man and his uncle heard the noise of a carriage driving up.

"It is she! I know her horses by the way they pull up." And it was not long before Madame Firmiani made her appearance.

"Oh!" she cried, with an impulse of annoyance on seeing Monsieur de Bourbonne. "But our uncle is not in the way," she went on with a sudden smile. "I have come to kneel at my husband's feet and humbly beseech him to accept my fortune. I have just received from the Austrian Embassy a document proving Firmiani's death. The paper, drawn up by the kind offices of the Austrian envoy at Constantinople, is quite formal, and the will which Firmiani's valet had in keeping for me is subjoined.—There, you are richer than I am, for you have there," and she tapped her husband's breast, "treasures which only God can add to." Then, unable to disguise her happiness, she hid her face in Octave's bosom.

"My sweet niece, we made love when I was young," said the uncle, "but now you love. You women are all that is good and lovely in humanity, for you are never guilty of your faults; they always originate with us."

PARIS, *February, 1831.*

Z. Marcas

I NEVER saw anybody, not even among the most remarkable men of the day, whose appearance was so striking as this man's; the study of his countenance at first gave me a feeling of great melancholy, and at last produced an almost painful impression.

There was a certain harmony between the man and his name. The Z. preceding Marcas, which was seen on the addresses of his letters, and which he never omitted from his signature, as the last letter of the alphabet, suggested some mysterious fatality.

MARCAS! say this two-syllabled name again and again; do you not feel as if it had some sinister meaning? Does it not seem to you that its owner must be doomed to martyrdom? Though foreign, savage, the name has a right to be handed down to posterity; it is well constructed, easily pronounced, and has the brevity that beseems a famous name. Is it not pleasant as well as odd? But does it not sound unfinished?

I will not take it upon myself to assert that names have no influence on the destiny of men. There is a certain secret and inexplicable concord or a visible discord between the events of a man's life and his name which is truly surprising; often some remote but very real correlation is revealed. Our globe is round; everything is linked to everything else. Some day perhaps we shall revert to the occult sciences.

Do you not discern in that letter Z an adverse influence? Does it not prefigure the wayward and fantastic progress of a storm-tossed life? What wind blew on that letter, which, whatever language we find it in, begins scarcely fifty words? Marcas's name was Zephirin; Saint Zephirin is highly venerated in Brittany, and Marcas was a Breton.

Study the name once more: Z. Marcas! The man's whole life lies in this fantastic juxtaposition of seven letters; seven! the most significant of all the cabalistic numbers.

And he died at five-and-thirty, so his life extended over seven lustres.

Marcas! Does it not hint of some precious object that is broken by a fall, with or without a crash?

I had finished studying the law in Paris in 1836. I lived at that time in the Rue Corneille in a house where none but students came to lodge, one of those large houses where there is a winding staircase quite at the back, lighted below from the street, higher up by borrowed lights, and at the top by a skylight. There were forty furnished rooms—furnished as students' rooms are! What does youth demand more than was here supplied? A bed, a few chairs, a chest of drawers, a looking-glass, and a table. As soon as the sky is blue the student opens his window.

But in this street there are no fair neighbors to flirt with. In front is the Odéon, long since closed, presenting a wall that is beginning to go black, its tiny gallery windows and its vast expanse of slate roof. I was not rich enough to have a good room; I was not even rich enough to have a room to myself. Juste and I shared a double-bedded room on the fifth floor.

On our side of the landing there were but two rooms—ours and a smaller one, occupied by Z. Marcas, our neighbor. For six months Juste and I remained in perfect ignorance of the fact. The old woman who managed the house had indeed told us that the room was inhabited, but she had added that we should not be disturbed, that the occupant was exceedingly quiet. In fact, for those six months, we never met our fellow-lodger, and we never heard a sound in his room, in spite of the thinness of the partition that divided us—one of those walls of lath and plaster which are common in Paris houses.

Our room, a little over seven feet high, was hung with a vile cheap paper sprigged with blue. The floor was painted, and knew nothing of the polish given by the *frotteur's* brush. By our beds there was only a scrap of thin carpet. The chimney opened immediately to the roof, and smoked so

abominably that we were obliged to provide a stove at our own expense. Our beds were mere painted wooden cribs like those in schools: on the chimney shelf there were but two brass candlesticks, with or without tallow candles in them, and our two pipes with some tobacco in a pouch or strewn abroad, also the little piles of cigar-ash left there by our visitors or ourselves.

A pair of calico curtains hung from the brass window rods, and on each side of the window was a small book-case in cherry-wood, such as everyone knows who has stared into the shop windows of the Quartier Latin, and in which we kept the few books necessary for our studies.

The ink in the inkstand was always in the state of lava congealed in the crater of a volcano. May not any inkstand nowadays become a Vesuvius? The pens, all twisted, served to clean the stems of our pipes; and, in opposition to all the laws of credit, paper was even scarcer than coin.

How can young men be expected to stay at home in such furnished lodgings? The students studied in the cafés, the theater, the Luxembourg gardens, in *grisettes'* rooms, even in the law schools—anywhere rather than in their horrible rooms—horrible for purposes of study, delightful as soon as they are used for gossiping and smoking in. Put a cloth on the table, and the impromptu dinner sent in from the best eating-house in the neighborhood—places for four—two of them in petticoats—show a lithograph of this "Interior" to the veriest bigot, and she will be bound to smile.

We thought only of amusing ourselves. The reason for our dissipation lay in the most serious fact of the politics of the time. Juste and I could not see any room for us in the two professions our parents wished us to take up. There are a hundred doctors, a hundred lawyers, for one that is wanted. The crowd is choking these two paths which are supposed to lead to fortune, but which are merely two arenas; men kill each other there, fighting, not indeed with swords or firearms, but with intrigue and calumny, with tremendous toil, campaigns in the sphere of the intellect as murderous as those in Italy were to the soldiers of the

Republic. In these days, when everything is an intellectual competition, a man must be able to sit forty-eight hours on end in his chair before a table, as a general could remain for two days on horseback and in his saddle.

The throng of aspirants has necessitated a division of the Faculty of Medicine into categories. There is the physician who writes and the physician who practices, the political physician, and the physician militant—four different ways of being a physician, four classes already filled up. As to the fifth class, that of physicians who sell remedies, there is such a competition that they fight each other with disgusting advertisements on the walls of Paris.

In all the law courts there are almost as many lawyers as there are cases. The pleader is thrown back on journalism, on politics, on literature. In fact, the State, besieged for the smallest appointments under the law, has ended by requiring that the applicants should have some little fortune. The pear-shaped head of the grocer's son is selected in preference to the square skull of a man of talent who has not a sou. Work as he will, with all his energy, a young man, starting from zero, may at the end of ten years find himself below the point he set out from. In these days, talent must have the good luck which secures success to the most incapable; nay more, if it scorns the base compromises which insure advancement to crawling mediocrity, it will never get on.

If we thoroughly knew our time, we also knew ourselves, and we preferred the indolence of dreamers to aimless stir, easy-going pleasure to the useless toil which would have exhausted our courage and worn out the edge of our intelligence. We had analyzed social life while smoking, laughing, and loafing. But, though elaborated by such means as these, our reflections were none the less judicious and profound.

While we were fully conscious of the slavery to which youth is condemned, we were amazed at the brutal indifference of the authorities to everything connected with intellect, thought, and poetry. How often have Juste and I exchanged glances when reading the papers as we studied

political events, or the debates in the Chamber, and discussed the proceedings of a Court whose willful ignorance could find no parallel but in the platitude of the courtiers, the mediocrity of the men forming the hedge round the newly restored throne, all alike devoid of talent or breadth of view, of distruction or learning, of influence or dignity!

Could there be a higher tribute to the Court of Charles X. than the present Court, if Court it may be called? What a hatred of the country may be seen in the naturalization of vulgar foreigners, devoid of talent, who are enthroned in the Chamber of Peers! What a perversion of justice! What an insult to the distinguished youth, the ambitious native to the soil of France! We looked upon these things as upon a spectacle, and groaned over them, without taking upon ourselves to act.

Juste, whom no one ever sought, and who never sought anyone, was, at five-and-twenty, a great politician, a man with a wonderful aptitude for apprehending the co-relation between remote history and the facts of the present and of the future. In 1831, he told me exactly what would and did happen—the murders, the conspiracies, the ascendency of the Jews, the difficulty of doing anything in France, the scarcity of talent in the higher circles, and the abundance of intellect in the lowest ranks, where the finest courage is smothered under cigar ashes.

What was to become of him? His parents wished him to be a doctor. But if he were a doctor, must he not wait twenty years for a practice? You know what he did? No? Well, he is a doctor; but he left France, he is in Asia. At this moment he is perhaps sinking under fatigue in a desert, or dying of the lashes of a barbarous horde—or perhaps he is some Indian prince's prime minister.

Action is my vocation. Leaving a civil college at the age of twenty, the only way for me to enter the army was by enlisting as a common soldier; so, weary of the dismal outlook that lay before a lawyer, I acquired the knowledge needed for a sailor. I imitate Juste, and keep out of France, where men waste, in the struggle to make way, the energy

needed for the noblest works. Follow my example, friends; I am going where a man steers his destiny as he pleases.

These great resolutions were formed in the little room in the lodging-house in the Rue Corneille, in spite of our haunting the Bal Musard, flirting with girls of the town, and leading a careless and apparently reckless life. Our plans and arguments long floated in the air.

Marcas, our neighbor, was in some degree the guide who led us to the margin of the precipice or the torrent, who made us sound it, and showed us beforehand what our fate would be if we let ourselves fall into it. It was he who put us on our guard against the time-bargains a man makes with poverty under the sanction of hope, by accepting precarious situations whence he fights the battle, carried along by the devious tide of Paris—that great harlot who takes you up or leaves you stranded, smiles or turns her back on you with equal readiness, wears out the strongest will in vexatious waiting, and makes misfortune wait on chance.

At our first meeting, Marcas, as it were, dazzled us. On our return from the schools, a little before the dinner-hour, we were accustomed to go up to our room and remain there a while, either waiting for the other, to learn whether there were any change in our plans for the evening. One day, at four o'clock, Juste met Marcas on the stairs, and I saw him in the street. It was in the month of November, and Marcas had no cloak; he wore shoes with heavy soles, corduroy trousers, and a double-breasted coat buttoned to the throat, which gave a military air to his broad chest, all the more so because he wore a black stock. The costume was not in itself extraordinary, but it agreed well with the man's mien and countenance.

My first impression on seeing him was neither surprise, nor distress, nor interest, nor pity, but curiosity mingled with all these feelings. He walked slowly with a step that betrayed deep melancholy, his head forward with a stoop, but not bent like that of a conscience-stricken man. That head, large and powerful, which might contain the treasures

necessary for a man of the highest ambition, looked as if it were loaded with thought; it was weighted with grief of mind, but there was no touch of remorse in his expression. As to his face, it may be summed up in a word. A common superstition has it that every human countenance resembles some animal. The animal for Marcas was the lion. His hair was like a mane, his nose was short and flat, broad and dented at the tip like a lion's; his brow, like a lion's, was strongly marked with a deep median furrow, dividing two powerful bosses. His high, hairy cheek-bones, all the more prominent because his cheeks were so thin, his enormous mouth and hollow jaws, were accentuated by lines of haughty significance, and marked by a complexion full of tawny shadows. This almost terrible countenance seemed illuminated by two lamps—two eyes, black indeed, but infinitely sweet, calm and deep, full of thought. If I may say so, those eyes had a humiliated expression.

Marcas was afraid of looking directly at others, not for himself, but for those on whom his fascinating gaze might rest; he had a power, and he shunned using it; he would spare those he met, and he feared notice. This was not from modesty, but from resignation—not Christian resignation, which implies charity, but resignation founded on reason, which had demonstrated the immediate inutility of his gifts, the impossibility of entering and living in the sphere for which he was fitted. Those eyes could at times flash lightnings. From those lips a voice of thunder must surely proceed; it was a mouth like Mirabeau's.

"I have seen such a grand fellow in the street," said I to Juste on coming in.

"It must be our neighbor," replied Juste, who described, in fact, the man I had just met. "A man who lives like a wood-louse would be sure to look like that," he added.

"What dejection and what dignity!"

"One is the consequence of the other."

"What ruined hopes! What schemes and failures!"

"Seven leagues of ruins! Obelisks—palaces—towers!—The ruins of Palmyra in the desert!" said Juste, laughing.

So we called him the Ruins of Palmyra.

As we went out to dine at the wretched eating-house in the Rue de la Harpe to which we subscribed, we asked the name of Number 37, and then heard the weird name Z. Marcas. Like boys, as we were, we repeated it more than a hundred times with all sorts of comments, absurd or melancholy, and the name lent itself to the jest. Juste would fire off the Z like a rocket rising, *z-z-z-z-zed;* and after pronouncing the first syllable of the name with great importance, depicted a fall by the dull brevity of the second.

"Now, how and where does this man live?"

From this query, to the innocent espionage of curiosity there was no pause, but that required for carrying out our plan. Instead of loitering about the streets, we both came in, each armed with a novel. We read with our ears open. And in the perfect silence of our attic rooms, we heard the even, dull sound of a sleeping man breathing.

"He is asleep," said I to Juste, noticing this fact.

"At seven o'clock!" replied the Doctor.

This was the name by which I called Juste, and he called me the Keeper of the Seals.

"A man must be wretched indeed to sleep as much as our neighbor!" cried I, jumping on to the chest of drawers with a knife in my hand, to which a corkscrew was attached.

I made a round hole at the top of the partition, about as big as a five-sou piece. I had forgotten that there would be no light in the room, and on putting my eye to the hole, I saw only darkness. At about one in the morning, when we had finished our books and were about to undress, we heard a noise in our neighbor's room. He got up, struck a match, and lighted his dip. I got on to the drawers again, and I then saw Marcas seated at his table and copying law-papers.

His room was about half the size of ours; the bed stood in a recess by the door, for the passage ended there, and its breadth was added to his garret; but the ground on which the house was built was evidently irregular, for the party-wall formed an obtuse angle, and the room was not square. There was no fireplace, only a small earthenware stove,

white blotched with green, of which the pipe went up through the roof. The window, in the skew side of the room, had shabby red curtains. The furniture consisted of an armchair, a table, a chair, and a wretched bedtable. A cupboard in the wall held his clothes. The wallpaper was horrible; evidently only a servant had ever lodged there before Marcas.

"What is to be seen?" asked the Doctor as I got down.

"Look for yourself," said I.

At nine next morning, Marcas was in bed. He had breakfasted off a saveloy; we saw on a plate, with some crumbs of bread, the remains of that too familiar delicacy. He was asleep; he did not wake till eleven. He then set to work again on the copy he had begun the night before, which was lying on the table.

On going downstairs we asked the price of that room, and were told fifteen francs a month.

In the course of a few days, we were fully informed as to the mode of life of Z. Marcas. He did copying, at so much a sheet no doubt, for a law-writer who lived in the courtyard of the Sainte-Chapelle. He worked half the night; after sleeping from six till ten, he began again and wrote till three. Then he went out to take the copy home before dinner, which he ate at Mizerai's in the Rue Michel-le-Comte, at a cost of nine sous, and came in to bed at six o'clock. It became known to us that Marcas did not utter fifteen sentences in a month; he never talked to anybody, nor said a word to himself in his dreadful garret.

"The Ruins of Palmyra are terribly silent!" said Juste.

This taciturnity in a man whose appearance was so imposing was strangely significant. Sometimes when we met him, we exchanged glances full of meaning on both sides, but they never led to any advances. Insensibly this man became the object of our secret admiration, though we knew no reason for it. Did it lie in his secretly simple habits, his monastic regularity, his hermit-like frugality, his idiotically mechanical labor, allowing his mind to remain neuter or to work on its own lines, seeming to us to hint at

an expectation of some stroke of good luck, or at some foregone conclusion as to his life?

After wandering for a long time among the Ruins of Palmyra, we forgot them—we were young! Then came the Carnival, the Paris Carnival, which, henceforth, will eclipse the old Carnival of Venice, unless some ill-advised Prefect of Police is antagonistic.

Gambling ought to be allowed during the Carnival; but the stupid moralists who have had gambling suppressed are inept financiers, and this indispensable evil will be re-established among us when it is proved that France leaves millions at the German tables.

This splendid Carnival brought us to utter penury, as it does every student. We got rid of every object of luxury; we sold our second coats, our second boots, our second waistcoats—everything of which we had a duplicate, except our friend. We ate bread and cold sausage; we looked where we walked; we had set to work in earnest. We owed two months' rent, and were sure of having a bill from the porter for sixty or eighty items each, and amounting to forty or fifty francs. We made no noise, and did not laugh as we crossed the little hall at the bottom of the stairs; we commonly took it at a flying leap from the lowest step into the street. On the day when we first found ourselves bereft of tobacco for our pipes, it struck us that for some days we had been eating bread without any kind of butter.

Great was our distress.

"No tobacco!" said the Doctor.

"No cloak!" said the Keeper of the Seals.

"Ah, you rascals, you would dress as the postillon de Longjumeau, you would appear as Débardeurs, sup in the morning, and breakfast at night at Véry's—sometimes even at the *Rocher de Cancale*.—Dry bread for you, my boys! Why," said I, in a big bass voice, "you deserve to sleep under the bed, you are not worthy to lie in it——"

"Yes, yes; but, Keeper of Seals, there is no more tobacco!" said Juste.

"It is high time to write home, to our aunts, our mothers,

and our sisters, to tell them we have no underlinen left, that the wear and tear of Paris would ruin garments of wire. Then we will solve an elegant chemical problem by transmuting linen into silver."

"But we must live till we get the answer."

"Well, I will go and bring out a loan among such of our friends as may still have some capital to invest."

"And how much will you find?"

"Say ten francs!" replied I with pride.

It was midnight. Marcas had heard everything. He knocked at our door.

"Messieurs," said he, "here is some tobacco; you can repay me on the first opportunity."

We were struck, not by the offer, which we accepted, but by the rich, deep, full voice in which it was made; a tone only comparable to the lowest string of Paganini's violin. Marcas vanished without waiting for our thanks.

Juste and I looked at each other without a word. To be rescued by a man evidently poorer than ourselves! Juste sat down to write to every member of his family, and I went off to effect a loan. I brought in twenty francs lent me by a fellow-provincial. In that evil but happy day gambling was still tolerated, and in its lodes, as hard as the rocky ore of Brazil, young men, by risking a small sum, had a chance of winning a few gold pieces. My friend, too, had some Turkish tobacco brought home from Constantinople, by a sailor, and he gave me quite as much as we had taken from Z. Marcas. I conveyed the splendid cargo into port, and we went in triumph to repay our neighbor with a tawny wig of Turkish tobacco for his dark *caporal*.

"You were determined not to be my debtors," said he. "You are giving me gold for copper.—You are boys—good boys——"

The sentences, spoken in varying tones, were variously emphasized. The words were nothing, but the expression! —That made us friends of ten years' standing at once.

Marcas, on hearing us coming, had covered up his papers; we understood that it would be taking a liberty to allude

to his means of subsistence, and felt ashamed of having watched him. His cupboard stood open; in it there were two shirts, a white necktie, and a razor. The razor made me shudder. A looking-glass, worth five francs perhaps, hung near the window.

The man's few and simple movements had a sort of savage grandeur. The Doctor and I looked at each other, wondering what we could say in reply. Juste, seeing that I was speechless, asked Marcas jestingly—

"You cultivate literature, Monsieur?"

"Far from it!" replied Marcas. "I should not be so wealthy."

"I fancied," said I, "that poetry alone, in these days, was amply sufficient to provide a man with lodgings as bad as ours."

My remark made Marcas smile, and the smile gave a charm to his yellow face.

"Ambition is not a less severe taskmaster to those who fail," said he. "You, who are beginning life, walk in the beaten paths. Never dream of rising superior, you will be ruined!"

"You advise us to stay just as we are?" said the Doctor, smiling.

There is something so infectious and childlike in the pleasantries of youth, that Marcas smiled again in reply.

"What incidents can have given you this detestable philosophy?" asked I.

"I forgot once more that chance is the result of an immense equation of which we know not all the factors. When we start from zero to work up to the unit, the chances are incalculable. To ambitious men Paris is an immense roulette table, and every young man fancies he can hit on a successful progression of numbers."

He offered us the tobacco I had brought that we might smoke with him; the Doctor went to fetch our pipes; Marcas filled his, and then he came to sit in our room, bringing the tobacco with him, since there were but two chairs in his. Juste, as brisk as a squirrel, ran out, and returned with a

boy carrying three bottles of Bordeaux, some Brie cheese, and a loaf.

"Hah!" said I to myself, "fifteen francs," and I was right to a sou.

Juste gravely laid five francs on the chimney-shelf.

There are immeasurable differences between the gregarious man and the man who lives closest to nature. Toussaint Louverture, after he was caught, died without speaking a word. Napoleon, transplanted to a rock, talked like a magpie—he wanted to account for himself. Z. Marcas erred in the same way, but for our benefit only. Silence in all its majesty is to be found only in the savage. There never is a criminal who, though he might let his secrets fall with his head into the basket of sawdust, does not feel the purely social impulse to tell them to somebody.

Nay, I am wrong. We have seen one Iroquois of the Faubourg Saint-Marceau who raised the Parisian to the level of the natural savage—a republican, a conspirator, a Frenchman, an old man, who outdid all we have heard of Negro determination, and all that Cooper tells us of the tenacity and coolness of the Red-Skins under defeat. Morey, the Guatomozin of the "Mountain," preserved an attitude unparalleled in the annals of European justice.

This is what Marcas told us during the small hours, sandwiching his discourse with slices of bread spread with cheese and washed down with wine. All the tobacco was burnt out. Now and then the hackney coaches clattering across the Place de l'Odéon, or the omnibuses toiling past, sent up their dull rumbling, as if to remind us that Paris was still close to us.

His family lived at Vitré; his father and mother had fifteen hundred francs a year in the funds. He had received an education gratis in a Seminary, but had refused to enter the priesthood. He felt in himself the fires of immense ambition, and had come to Paris on foot at the age of twenty, the possessor of two hundred francs. He had studied the law, working in an attorney's office, where he

had risen to be senior clerk. He had taken his doctor's degree in law, had mastered the old and modern codes, and could hold his own with the most famous pleaders. He had studied the law of nations, and was familiar with European treaties and international practice. He had studied men and things in five capitals—London, Berlin, Vienna, Petersburg, and Constantinople.

No man was better informed than he as to the rules of the Chamber. For five years he had been reporter of the debates for a daily paper. He spoke extempore and admirably, and could go on for a long time in that deep, appealing voice which had struck us to the soul. Indeed, he proved by the narrative of his life that he was a great orator, a concise orator, serious and yet full of piercing eloquence; he resembled Berryer in his favor and in the impetus which commands the sympathy of the masses, and was like Thiers in refinement and skill; but he would have been less diffuse, less in difficulties for a conclusion. He had intended to rise rapidly to power without burdening himself first with the doctrines necessary to begin with, for a man in opposition, but an incubus later to the statesman.

Marcas had learned everything that a real statesman should know; indeed, his amazement was considerable when he had occasion to discern the utter ignorance of men who have risen to the administration of public affairs in France. Though in him it was vocation that had led to study, nature had been generous and bestowed all that cannot be acquired —keen perceptions, self-command, a nimble wit, rapid judgment, decisiveness, and, what is the genius of these men, fertility in resource.

By the time when Marcas thought himself duly equipped, France was torn by intestine divisions arising from the triumph of the House of Orleans over the elder branch of the Bourbons.

The field of political warfare is evidently changed. Civil war henceforth cannot last for long, and will not be fought out in the provinces. In France such struggles will be of

brief duration and at the seat of government; and the battle will be the close of the moral contest which will have been brought to an issue by superior minds. This state of things will continue so long as France has her present singular form of government, which has no analogy with that of any other country; for there is no more resemblance between the English and the French constitutions than between the two lands.

Thus Marcas's place was in the political press. Being poor and unable to secure his election, he hoped to make a sudden appearance. He resolved on making the greatest possible sacrifice for a man of superior intellect, to work as subordinate to some rich and ambitious deputy. Like a second Bonaparte, he sought his Barras; the new Colbert hoped to find a Mazarin. He did immense services, and he did them then and there; he assumed no importance, he made no boast, he did not complain of ingratitude. He did them in the hope that his patron would put him in a position to be elected deputy; Marcas wished for nothing but a loan that might enable him to purchase a house in Paris, the qualification required by law. Richard III. asked for nothing but his horse.

In three years Marcas had made his man—one of the fifty supposed great statesmen who are the battledores with which two cunning players toss the ministerial portfolios, exactly as the man behind the puppet-show hits Punch against the constable in his street theater, and counts on always getting paid. This man existed only by Marcas, but he had just brains enough to appreciate the value of his "ghost," and to know that Marcas, if he ever came to the front, would remain there, would be indispensable, while he himself would be translated to the polar zone of the Luxembourg. So he determined to put insurmountable obstacles in the way of his Mentor's advancement, and hid his purpose under the semblance of the utmost sincerity. Like all mean men, he could dissimulate to perfection, and he soon made progress in the ways of ingratitude, for he felt that he must kill Marcas, not to be killed by him. These

two men, apparently so united, hated each other as soon as one had once deceived the other.

The politician was made one of a ministry; Marcas remained in the opposition to hinder his man from being attacked; nay, by skillful tactics he won him the applause of the opposition. To excuse himself for not rewarding his subaltern, the chief pointed out the impossibility of finding a place suddenly for a man on the other side, without a great deal of maneuvering. Marcas had hoped confidently for a place to enable him to marry, and thus acquire the qualification he so ardently desired. He was two-and-thirty, and the Chamber ere long must be dissolved. Having detected his man in this flagrant act of bad faith, he overthrew him, or at any rate contributed largely to his overthrow, and covered him with mud.

A fallen minister, if he is to rise again to power, must show that he is to be feared; this man, intoxicated by Royal glibness, had fancied that his position would be permanent; he acknowledged his delinquencies; besides confessing them, he did Marcas a small money service, for Marcas had got into debt. He subsidized the newspaper on which Marcas worked, and made him the manager of it.

Though he despised the man, Marcas, who, practically, was being subsidized too, consented to take the part of the fallen minister. Without unmasking at once all the batteries of his superior intellect, Marcas came a little further than before; he showed half his shrewdness. The Ministry lasted only a hundred and eighty days; it was swallowed up. Marcas had put himself into communication with certain deputies, had molded them like dough, leaving each impressed with a high opinion of his talent; his puppet again became a member of the Ministry, and then the paper was ministerial. The Ministry united the paper with another, solely to squeeze out Marcas, who in this fusion had to make way for a rich and insolent rival, whose name was well known, and who already had his foot in the stirrup.

Marcas relapsed into utter destitution; his haughty patron well knew the depths into which he had cast him.

Where was he to go? The ministerial papers, privily warned, would have nothing to say to him. The opposition papers did not care to admit him to their offices. Marcas could side neither with the Republicans nor with the Legitimists, two parties whose triumph would mean the overthrow of everything that now is.

"Ambitious men like a fast hold on things," said he with a smile.

He lived by writing a few articles on commercial affairs, and contributed to one of those encyclopedias brought out by speculation and not by learning. Finally a paper was founded, which was destined to live but two years, but which secured his services. From that moment he renewed his connection with the minister's enemies; he joined the party who were working for the fall of the Government; and as soon as his pickax had free play, it fell.

This paper had now for six months ceased to exist; he had failed to find employment of any kind; he was spoken of as a dangerous man, calumny attacked him; he had unmasked a huge financial and mercantile job by a few articles and a pamphlet. He was known to be the mouthpiece of a banker who was said to have paid him largely, and from whom he was supposed to expect some patronage in return for his championship. Marcas, disgusted by men and things, worn out by five years of fighting, regarded as a free lance rather than as a great leader, crushed by the necessity for earning his daily bread, which hindered him from gaining ground, in despair at the influence exerted by money over mind, and given over to dire poverty, buried himself in a garret, to make thirty sous a day, the sum strictly answering to his needs. Meditation had leveled a desert all round him. He read the papers to be informed of what was going on. Pozzo di Borgo had once lived like this for some time.

Marcas, no doubt, was planning a serious attack, accustoming himself to dissimulation, and punishing himself for his blunders by Pythagorean muteness. But he did not tell us the reasons for his conduct.

It is impossible to give you an idea of the scenes of the highest comedy that lay behind this algebraic statement of his career; his useless patience dogging the footsteps of Fortune, which presently took wings, his long tramps over the thorny brakes of Paris, his breathless chases as a petitioner, his attempts to win over fools; the schemes laid only to fail through the influence of some frivolous woman; the meetings with men of business who expected their capital to bring them places and a peerage, as well as large interest. Then the hopes rising in a towering wave only to break in foam on the shoal; the wonders wrought in reconciling adverse interests which, after working together for a week, fell asunder; the annoyance, a thousand times repeated, of seeing a dunce decorated with the Legion of Honor, and preferred, though as ignorant as a shopboy, to a man of talent. Then, what Marcas called the stratagems of stupidity—you strike a man, and he seems convinced, he nods his head—everything is settled; next day, this india rubber ball, flattened for a moment, has recovered itself in the course of the night; it is as full of wind as ever; you must begin all over again; and you go on till you understand that you are not dealing with a man, but with a lump of gum that loses shape in the sunshine.

These thousand annoyances, this vast waste of human energy on barren spots, the difficulty of achieving any good, the incredible facility of doing mischief; two strong games played out, twice won and then twice lost; the hatred of a statesman—a blockhead with a painted face and wig, but in whom the world believed—all these things, great and small, had not crushed, but for the moment had dashed, Marcas. In the days when money had come into his hands, his fingers had not clutched it; he had allowed himself the exquisite pleasure of sending it all to his family—to his sisters, his brothers, his old father. Like Napoleon in his fall, he asked for no more than thirty sous a day, and any man of energy can earn thirty sous for a day's work in Paris.

When Marcas had finished the story of his life, intermingled with reflections, maxims, and observations, reveal-

ing him as a great politician, a few questions and answers on both sides as to the progress of affairs in France and in Europe were enough to prove to us that he was a real statesman; for a man may be quickly and easily judged when he can be brought on to the ground of immediate difficulties: there is a certain Shibboleth for men of superior talents, and we were of the tribe of modern Levites without belonging as yet to the Temple. As I have said, our frivolity covered certain purposes which Juste has carried out, and which I am about to execute.

When we had done talking, we all three went out, cold as it was, to walk in the Luxembourg gardens till the dinner hour. In the course of that walk our conversation, grave throughout, turned on the painful aspects of the political situation. Each of us contributed his remarks, his comment, or his jest, a pleasantry or a proverb. This was no longer exclusively a discussion of life on the colossal scale just described by Marcas, the soldier of political warfare. Nor was it the distressful monologue of the wrecked navigator, stranded in a garret in the Hôtel Corneille; it was a dialogue in which two well-informed young men, having gauged the times they lived in, were endeavoring, under the guidance of a man of talent, to gain some light on their own future prospects.

"Why," asked Juste, "did you not wait patiently for an opportunity, and imitate the only man who has been able to keep the lead since the Revolution of July by holding his head above water?"

"Have I not said that we never know where the roots of chance lie? Carrel was in identically the same position as the orator you speak of. That gloomy young man, of a bitter spirit, had a whole government in his head; the man of whom you speak had no idea beyond mounting on the crupper of every event. Of the two, Carrel was the better man. Well, one became a minister, Carrel remained a journalist; the incomplete but craftier man is living; Carrel is dead.

"I may point out that your man has fifteen years been

making his way, and is but making it still. He may yet be caught and crushed between two cars full of intrigues on the highroad to power. He has no house; he has not the favor of the Palace like Metternich; nor, like Villèle, the protection of a compact majority.

"I do not believe that the present state of things will last ten years longer. Hence, supposing I should have such poor good luck, I am already too late to avoid being swept away by the commotion I foresee. I should need to be established in a superior position."

"What commotion?" asked Juste.

"August, 1830," said Marcas in solemn tones, holding out his hand towards Paris; "August, the offspring of Youth which bound the sheaves, and of Intellect which had ripened the harvest, forgot to provide for Youth and Intellect.

"Youth will explode like the boiler of a steam engine. Youth has no outlet in France; it is gathering an avalanche of underrated capabilities, of legitimate and restless ambitions; young men are not marrying now; families cannot tell what to do with their children. What will the thunderclap be that will shake down these masses? I know not, but they will crash down into the midst of things, and overthrow everything. These are laws of hydrostatics which act on the human race; the Roman Empire had failed to understand them, and the Barbaric hordes came down.

"The Barbaric hordes now are the intelligent class. The laws of overpressure are at this moment acting slowly and silently in our midst. The Government is the great criminal; it does not appreciate the two powers to which it owes everything; it has allowed its hands to be tied by the absurdities of the Contract; it is bound, ready to be the victim.

"Louis XIV, Napoleon, England, all were or are eager for intelligent youth. In France the young are condemned by the new legislation, by the blundering principles of elective rights, by the unsoundness of the ministerial constitution.

"Look at the elective Chamber; you will find no deputies

of thirty; the youth of Richelieu and of Mazarin, of Turenne and of Colbert, of Pitt and of Saint-Just, of Napoleon and of Prince Metternich, would find no admission there; Burke, Sheridan, or Fox could not win seats. Even if political majority had been fixed at one-and-twenty, and eligibility had been relieved of every disabling qualification, the Departments would have returned the very same members, men devoid of political talent, unable to speak without murdering French grammar, and among whom, in ten years, scarcely one statesman has been found.

"The causes of an impending event may be seen, but the event itself cannot be foretold. At this moment the youth of France is being driven into Republicanism, because it believes that the Republic would bring it emancipation. It will always remember the young representatives of the people and the young army leaders! The imprudence of the Government is only comparable to its avarice."

That day left its echoes in our lives. Marcas confirmed us in our resolution to leave France, where young men of talent and energy are crushed under the weight of successful commonplace, envious, and insatiable middle age.

We dined together in the Rue de la Harpe. We thenceforth felt for Marcas the most respectful affection; he gave us the most practical aid in the sphere of the mind. That man knew everything; he had studied everything. For us he cast his eye over the whole civilized world, seeking the country where openings would be at once the most abundant and the most favorable to the success of our plans. He indicated what should be the goal of our studies; he bid us make haste, explaining to us that time was precious, that emigration would presently begin, and that its effect would be to deprive France of the cream of its powers and of its youthful talent; that their intelligence, necessarily sharpened, would select the best places, and that the great thing was to be first in the field.

Thenceforward, we often sat late at work under the lamp. Our generous instructor wrote some notes for our guidance —two pages for Juste and three for me—full of invaluable

advice—the sort of information which experience alone can supply, such landmarks as only genius can place. In those papers, smelling of tobacco, and covered with writing so vile as to be almost hieroglyphic, there are suggestions for a fortune, and forecasts of unerring acumen. There are hints as to certain parts of America and Asia which have been fully justified, both before and since Juste and I could set out.

Marcas, like us, was in the most abject poverty. He earned, indeed, his daily bread, but he had neither linen, clothes, nor shoes. He did not make himself out any better than he was; his dreams had been of luxury as well as power. He did not admit that this was the real Marcas; he abandoned his person, indeed, to the caprices of life. What he lived by was the breath of ambition; he dreamed of revenge while blaming himself for yielding to so shallow a feeling. The true statesman ought, above all things, to be superior to vulgar passions; like the man of science, he should have no passion but for his science. It was in these days of dire necessity that Marcas seemed to us so great—nay, so terrible; there was something awful in the gaze which saw another world than that which strikes the eyes of ordinary men. To us he was a subject of contemplation and astonishment; for the young—which of us has not known it?—the young have a keen craving to admire; they love to attach themselves, and are naturally inclined to submit to the men they feel to be superior, as they are to devote themselves to a great cause.

Our surprise was chiefly aroused by his indifference in matters of sentiment; woman had no place in his life. When we spoke of this matter, a perennial theme of conversation among Frenchmen, he simply remarked—

"Gowns cost too much."

He saw the look that passed between Juste and me, and went on—

"Yes, far too much. The woman you buy—and she is the least expensive—takes a great deal of money. The woman who gives herself takes all your time! Woman extin-

guishes every energy, every ambition. Napoleon reduced her to what she should be. From that point of view, he really was great. He did not indulge such ruinous fancies as Louis XIV and Louis XV; at the same time, he could love in secret."

We discovered that, like Pitt, who made England his wife, Marcas bore France in his heart; he idolized his country; he had not a thought that was not for his native land. His fury at feeling that he had in his hands the remedy for the evils which so deeply saddened him, and could not apply it, ate into his soul, and this rage was increased by the inferiority of France at that time, as compared with Russia and England. France a third-rate power! This cry came up again and again in his conversation. The intestinal disorders of his country had entered into his soul. All the contests between the Court and the Chamber, showing, as they did, incessant change and constant vacillation, which must injure the prosperity of the country, he scoffed at as backstairs squabbles.

"This is peace at the cost of the future," said he.

One evening Juste and I were at work, sitting in perfect silence. Marcas had just risen to toil at his copying, for he had refused our assistance in spite of our most earnest entreaties. We had offered to take it in turns to copy a batch of manuscript, so that he should do but a third of his distasteful task; he had been quite angry, and we had ceased to insist.

We had heard the sound of gentlemanly boots in the passage, and raised our heads, looking at each other. There was a tap at Marcas's door—he never took the key out of the lock—and we heard our hero answer—

"Come in." Then—"What! you here, Monsieur!"

"I myself," replied the retired minister.

It was the Diocletian of this unknown martyr.

For some time he and our neighbor conversed in an undertone. Suddenly Marcas, whose voice had been heard but rarely, as is natural in a dialogue in which the applicant

begins by setting forth the situation, broke out loudly in reply to some offer we had not overheard.

"You would laugh at me for a fool," cried he, "if I took you at your word. Jesuits are a thing of the past, but Jesuitism is eternal. Your Machiavelism and your generosity are equally hollow and untrustworthy. You can make your own calculations, but who can calculate on you? Your Court is made up of owls who fear the light, of old men who quake in the presence of the young, or who simply disregard them. The Government is formed on the same pattern as the Court. You have hunted up the remains of the Empire, as the Restoration enlisted the Voltigeurs of Louis XIV.

"Hitherto the evasions of cowardice have been taken for the maneuvering of ability; but dangers will come, and the younger generation will rise as they did in 1790. They did grand things then. Just now you change ministries as a sick man turns in his bed; these oscillations betray the weakness of the Government. You work on an underhand system of policy which will be turned against you, for France will be tired of your shuffling. France will not tell you that she is tired of you; a man never knows whence his ruin comes; it is the historian's task to find out; but you will undoubtedly perish as the reward of not having asked the youth of France to lend you its strength and energy; for having hated really capable men; for not having lovingly chosen them from this noble generation; for having in all cases preferred mediocrity.

"You have come to ask my support, but you are an atom in that decrepit heap which is made hideous by self-interest, which trembles and squirms, and, because it is so mean, tries to make France mean too. My strong nature, my ideas, would work like poison in you; twice you have tricked me, twice have I overthrown you. If we unite a third time, it must be a very serious matter. I should kill myself if I allowed myself to be duped; for I should be to blame, not you."

Then we heard the humblest entreaties, the most fervent

adjurations, not to deprive the country of such superior talents. The man spoke of patriotism, and Marcas uttered a significant "*Ouh! ouh!*" He laughed at his would-be patron. Then the statesman was more explicit; he bowed to the superiority of his ere-while counselor; he pledged himself to enable Marcas to remain in office, to be elected deputy; then he offered him a high appointment, promising him that he, the speaker, would thenceforth be the subordinate of a man whose subaltern he was only worthy to be. He was in the newly-formed ministry, and he would not return to power unless Marcas had a post in proportion to his merit; he had already made it a condition, Marcas had been regarded as indispensable.

Marcas refused.

"I have never before been in a position to keep my promises; here is an opportunity of proving myself faithful to my word, and you fail me!"

To this Marcas made no reply. The boots were again audible in the passage on the way to the stairs.

"Marcas, Marcas!" we both cried, rushing into his room. "Why refuse? He really meant it. His offers are very handsome; at any rate, go to see the ministers."

In a twinkling, we had given Marcas a hundred reasons. The minister's voice was sincere; without seeing him, we had felt sure that he was honest.

"I have no clothes," replied Marcas.

"Rely on us," said Juste, with a glance at me.

Marcas had the courage to trust us; a light flashed in his eye, he pushed his fingers through his hair, lifting it from his forehead with a gesture that showed some confidence in his luck; and when he had thus unveiled his face, so to speak, we saw in him a man absolutely unknown to us—Marcas sublime, Marcas in his power! His mind in its element—the bird restored to the free air, the fish to the water, the horse galloping across the plain.

It was transient. His brow clouded again; he had, it would seem, a vision of his fate. Halting doubt had followed close on the heels of white-winged hope.

We left him to himself.

"Now then," said I to the Doctor, "we have given our word; how are we to keep it?"

"We will sleep upon it," said Juste, "and to-morrow morning we will talk it over."

Next morning we went for a walk in the Luxembourg. We had had time to think over the incident of the past night, and were both equally surprised at the lack of address shown by Marcas in the minor difficulties of life—he, a man who never saw any difficulties in the solution of the hardest problems of abstract or practical politics. But these elevated characters can all be tripped up on a grain of sand, and will, like the grandest enterprise, miss fire for want of a thousand francs. It is the old story of Napoleon, who, for lack of a pair of boots, did not set out for India.

"Well, what have you hit upon?" asked Juste.

"I have thought of a way to get him a complete outfit."

"Where?"

"From Humann."

"How?"

"Humann, my boy, never goes to his customers—his customers go to him; so that he does not know whether I am rich or poor. He only knows that I dress well and look decent in the clothes he makes for me. I shall tell him that an uncle of mine has dropped in from the country, and that his indifference in matters of dress is quite a discredit to me in the upper circles where I am trying to find a wife. It will not be Humann if he sends in his bill before three months."

The Doctor thought this a capital idea for a vaudeville, but poor enough in real life, and doubted my success. But I give you my word of honor, Humann dressed Marcas, and, being an artist, turned him out as a political personage ought to be dressed.

Juste lent Marcas two hundred francs in gold, the product of two watches bought on credit, and pawned at the Mont-de-Piété. For my part, I had said nothing of six shirts and all necessary linen, which cost me no more than the pleasure

of asking for them from a forewoman in a shop whom I had treated to Musard's during the carnival.

Marcas accepted everything, thanking us no more than he ought. He only inquired as to the means by which we had got possession of such riches, and we made him laugh for the last time. We looked on our Marcas as shipowners, when they have exhausted their credit and every resource at their command to fit out a vessel, must look on it as it puts to sea.

Here Charles was silent; he seemed crushed by his memories.

"Well," cried the audience, "and what happened?"

I will tell you in few words—for this is not romance—it is history.

We saw no more of Marcas. The administration lasted for three months; it fell at the end of the session. Then Marcas came back to us, worked to death. He had sounded the crater of power; he came away from it with the beginnings of brain fever. The disease made rapid progress; we nursed him. Juste at once called in the chief physician of the hospital where he was working as house surgeon. I was then living alone in our room, and I was the most attentive attendant; but care and science alike were in vain. By the month of January, 1838, Marcas himself felt that he had but a few days to live.

The man whose soul and brain he had been for six months never even sent to inquire after him. Marcas expressed the greatest contempt for the Government; he seemed to doubt what the fate of France might be, and it was this doubt that had made him ill. He had, he thought, detected treason in the heart of power, not tangible, seizable treason, the result of facts, but the treason of a system, the subordination of national interests to selfish ends. His belief in the degradation of the country was enough to aggravate his complaint.

I myself was witness to the proposals made to him by one of the leaders of the antagonistic party which he had fought against. His hatred of the men he had tried to serve was so

virulent, that he would gladly have joined the coalition that was about to be formed among certain ambitious spirits who, at least, had one idea in common—that of shaking off the yoke of the Court. But Marcas could only reply to the envoy in the words of the Hôtel de Ville—

"It is too late!"

Marcas did not leave money enough to pay for his funeral. Juste and I had great difficulty in saving him from the ignominy of a pauper's bier, and we alone followed the coffin of Z. Marcas, which was dropped into the common grave of the cemetery of Mont-Parnasse.

We looked sadly at each other as we listened to this tale, the last we heard from the lips of Charles Rabourdin the day before he embarked at le Havre on a brig that was to convey him to the islands of Malay. We all knew more than one Marcas, more than one victim of his devotion to a party, repaid by betrayal or neglect.

LES JARDIES, *May*, 1840.

Honoré de Balzac

Melmoth Reconciled *

To Monsieur le Général Baron de Pommereul, a token of the friendship between our fathers, which survives in their sons.

DE BALZAC.

THERE is a special variety of human nature obtained in the Social Kingdom by a process analogous to that of the gardener's craft in the Vegetable Kingdom, to wit, by the forcing-house—a species of hybrid which can be raised neither from seed nor from slips. This product is known as the Cashier, an anthropomorphous growth, watered by religious doctrine, trained up in fear of the guillotine, pruned by vice, to flourish on a third floor with an estimable wife by his side and an uninteresting family. The number of cashiers in Paris must always be a problem for the physiologist. Has anyone as yet been able to state correctly the terms of the proportion sum wherein the cashier figures as the unknown x? Where will you find the man who shall live with wealth, like a cat with a caged mouse? This man, for further qualification, shall be capable of sitting boxed in behind an iron grating for seven or eight hours a day during seven-eighths of the year, perched upon a cane-seated chair in a space as narrow as a lieutenant's cabin on board a man-of-war. Such a man must be able to defy anchylosis of the knee and thigh joints; he must have a soul above meanness, in order to live meanly; must lose all relish for money by dint of handling it. Demand this peculiar specimen of any creed, educational system, school, or institution you please, and select Paris, that city of fiery

* For the narrative "Melmoth the Wanderer," and a description of Balzac's debt to its author, see Volume III, page 161.—EDITOR.

ordeals and branch establishment of hell, as the soil in which to plant the said cashier. So be it. Creeds, schools, institutions, and moral systems, all human rules and regulations, great and small, will, one after another, present much the same face that an intimate friend turns upon you when you ask him to lend you a thousand francs. With a dolorous dropping of the jaw, they indicate the guillotine, much as your friend aforesaid will furnish you with the address of the money lender, pointing you to one of the hundred gates by which a man comes to the last refuge of the destitute.

Yet Nature has her freaks in the making of a man's mind; she indulges herself and makes a few honest folk now and again, and now and then a cashier.

Wherefore, that race of corsairs whom we dignify with the title of bankers, the gentry who take out a license for which they pay a thousand crowns, as the privateer takes out his letters of marque, hold these rare products of the incubations of virtue in such esteem that they confine them in cages in their counting-houses, much as governments procure and maintain specimens of strange beasts at their own charges.

If the cashier is possessed of an imagination or of a fervid temperament; if, as will sometimes happen to the most complete cashier, he loves his wife, and that wife grows tired of her lot, has ambitions, or merely some vanity in her composition, the cashier is undone. Search the chronicles of the counting-house. You will not find a single instance of a cashier attaining *a position*, as it is called. They are sent to the hulks; they go to foreign parts; they vegetate on a second floor in the Rue Saint-Louis among the market gardens of the Marais. Some day, when the cashiers of Paris come to a sense of their real value, a cashier will be hardly obtainable for money. Still, certain it is that there are people who are fit for nothing but to be cashiers, just as the bent of a certain order of mind inevitably makes for rascality. But, oh marvel of our civilization! Society rewards virtue with an income of a hun-

dred louis in old age, a dwelling on a second floor, bread sufficient, occasional new bandana handkerchiefs, an elderly wife and her offspring.

So much for virtue. But for the opposite course, a little boldness, a faculty for keeping on the windward side of the law, as Turenne outflanked Montecuculli, and Society will sanction the theft of millions, shower ribbons upon the thief, cram him with honors, and smother him with consideration.

Government, moreover, works harmoniously with this profoundly illogical reasoner—Society. Government levies a conscription on the young intelligence of the kingdom at the age of seventeen or eighteen, a conscription of precocious power. Great ability is prematurely exhausted by excessive brain work before it is sent up to be submitted to a process of selection. Nurserymen sort and select seeds in much the same way. To this process the Government brings professional appraisers of talent, men who can assay brains as experts assay gold at the Mint. Five hundred such heads, set afire with hope, are sent up annually by the most progressive portion of the population; and of these the Government takes one third, puts them in sacks called the Écoles, and shakes them up together for three years. Though every one of these young plants represents vast productive power, they are made, as one may say, into cashiers. They receive appointments; the rank and file of engineers is made up of them; they are employed as captains of artillery; there is no (subaltern) grade to which they may not aspire. Finally, when these men, the pick of the youth of the nation, fattened on mathematics and stuffed with knowledge, have attained the age of fifty years, they have their reward, and receive as the price of their services the third-floor lodging, the wife and family, and all the comforts that sweeten life for mediocrity. If from among this race of dupes there should escape some five or six men of genius who climb the highest heights, is it not miraculous?

This is an exact statement of the relations between Tal-

ent and Probity on the one hand, and Government and Society on the other, in an age that considers itself to be progressive. Without this prefatory explanation a recent occurrence in Paris would seem improbable; but preceded by this summing up of the situation, it will perhaps receive some thoughtful attention from minds capable of recognizing the real plague spots of our civilization, a civilization which since 1815 has been moved by the spirit of gain rather than by principles of honor.

About five o'clock, on a dull autumn afternoon, the cashier of one of the largest banks in Paris was still at his desk, working by the light of a lamp that had been lit for some time. In accordance with the use and wont of commerce, the counting-house was in the darkest corner of the low-ceiled and far from spacious mezzanine floor, and at the very end of a passage lighted only by borrowed lights. The office doors along this corridor, each with its label, gave the place the look of a bath-house. At four o'clock the stolid porter had proclaimed, according to his orders, "The bank is closed." And by this time the departments were deserted, the letters dispatched, the clerks had taken their leave. The wives of the partners in the firm were expecting their lovers; the two bankers dining with their mistresses. Everything was in order.

The place where the strong boxes had been bedded in sheet iron was just behind the little sanctum, where the cashier was busy. Doubtless he was balancing his books. The open front gave a glimpse of a safe of hammered iron, so enormously heavy (thanks to the science of the modern inventor) that burglars could not carry it away. The door only opened at the pleasure of those who knew its password. The letter-lock was a warden who kept its own secret and could not be bribed; the mysterious word was an ingenious realization of the "Open sesame!" in the *Arabian Nights*. But even this was as nothing. A man might discover the password; but unless he knew the lock's final secret, the *ultima ratio* of this gold-guarding dragon

of mechanical science, it discharged a blunderbuss at his head.

The door of the room, the walls of the room, the shutters of the windows in the room, the whole place, in fact, was lined with sheet iron a third of an inch in thickness, concealed behind the thin wooden paneling. The shutters had been closed, the door had been shut. If ever man could feel confident that he was absolutely alone, and that there was no remote possibility of being watched by prying eyes, that man was the cashier of the house of Nucingen and Company in the Rue Saint-Lazare.

Accordingly the deepest silence prevailed in that iron cave. The fire had died out in the stove, but the room was full of that tepid warmth which produces the dull heavy-headedness and nauseous queasiness of a morning after an orgy. The stove is a mesmerist that plays no small part in the reduction of bank clerks and porters to a state of idiocy.

A room with a stove in it is a retort in which the power of strong men is evaporated, where their vitality is exhausted, and their wills enfeebled. Government offices are part of a great scheme for the manufacture of the mediocrity necessary for the maintenance of a Feudal System on a pecuniary basis—and money is the foundation of the Social Contract. (See *Les Employés*.) The mephitic vapors in the atmosphere of a crowded room contribute in no small degree to bring about a gradual deterioration of intelligences, the brain that gives off the largest quantity of nitrogen asphyxiates the others, in the long run.

The cashier was a man of five and forty or thereabouts. As he sat at the table, the light from a moderator lamp shining full on his bald head and glistening fringe of iron-gray hair that surrounded it—this baldness and the round outlines of his face made his head look very like a ball. His complexion was brick-red, a few wrinkles had gathered about his eyes, but he had the smooth, plump hands of a stout man. His blue cloth coat, a little rubbed and worn, and the creases and shininess of his trousers, traces of hard

wear that the clothes-brush fails to remove, would impress a superficial observer with the idea that here was a thrifty and upright human being, sufficient of the philosopher or of the aristocrat to wear shabby clothes. But, unluckily, it is easy to find penny-wise people who will prove weak, wasteful, or incompetent in the capital things of life.

The cashier wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honor at his buttonhole, for he had been a major of dragoons in the time of the Emperor. M. de Nucingen, who had been a contractor before he became a banker, had had reason in those days to know the honorable disposition of his cashier, who then occupied a high position. Reverses of fortune had befallen the major, and the banker out of regard for him paid him five hundred francs a month. The soldier had become a cashier in the year 1813, after his recovery from a wound received at Studzianka during the Retreat from Moscow, followed by six months of enforced idleness at Strasbourg, whither several officers had been transported by order of the Emperor, that they might receive skilled attention. This particular officer, Castanier by name, retired with the honorary grade of colonel, and a pension of two thousand four hundred francs.

In ten years' time the cashier had completely effaced the soldier, and Castanier inspired the banker with such trust in him, that he was associated in the transactions that went on in the private office behind his little counting-house. The baron himself had access to it by means of a secret staircase. There, matters of business were decided. It was the bolting room where proposals were sifted; the privy council chamber where the reports of the money market were analyzed; circular notes issued thence; and finally, the private ledger and the journal which summarized the work of all the departments were kept there.

Castanier had gone himself to shut the door which opened on to a staircase that led to the parlor occupied by the two bankers on the first floor of their hotel. This done, he had sat down at his desk again, and for a moment

he gazed at a little collection of letters of credit drawn on the firm of Watschildine of London. Then he had taken up the pen and imitated the banker's signature upon each. *Nucingen* he wrote, and eyed the forged signatures critically to see which seemed the most perfect copy.

Suddenly he looked up as if a needle had pricked him. "You are not alone!" a boding voice seemed to cry in his heart; and indeed the forger saw a man standing at the little grated window of the counting-house, a man whose breathing was so noiseless that he did not seem to breathe at all. Castanier looked, and saw that the door at the end of the passage was wide open; the stranger must have entered by that way.

For the first time in his life the old soldier felt a sensation of dread that made him stare open-mouthed and wide-eyed at the man before him; and for that matter, the appearance of the apparition was sufficiently alarming even if unaccompanied by the mysterious circumstances of so sudden an entry. The rounded forehead, the harsh coloring of the long oval face, indicated quite as plainly as the cut of his clothes that the man was an Englishman, reeking of his native isles. You had only to look at the collar of his overcoat, at the voluminous cravat which smothered the crushed frills of a shirt front so white that it brought out the changeless leaden hue of an impassive face, and the thin red line of the lips that seemed made to suck the blood of corpses; and you could guess at once at the black gaiters buttoned up to the knee, and the half-puritanical costume of a wealthy Englishman dressed for a walking excursion. The intolerable glitter of the stranger's eyes produced a vivid and unpleasant impression, which was only deepened by the rigid outlines of his features. The dried-up, emaciated creature seemed to carry within him some gnawing thought that consumed him and could not be appeased.

He must have digested his food so rapidly that he could doubtless eat continually without bringing any trace of color into his face or features. A tun of Tokay *vin de suc-*

cession would not have caused any faltering in that piercing glance that read men's inmost thoughts, nor dethroned the merciless reasoning faculty that always seemed to go to the bottom of things. There was something of the fell and tranquil majesty of a tiger about him.

"I have come to cash this bill of exchange, sir," he said. Castanier felt the tones of his voice thrill through every nerve with a violent shock similar to that given by a discharge of electricity.

"The safe is closed," said Castanier.

"It is open," said the Englishman, looking round the counting-house. "To-morrow is Sunday, and I cannot wait. The amount is for five hundred thousand francs. You have the money there, and I must have it."

"But how did you come in, sir?"

The Englishman smiled. That smile frightened Castanier. No words could have replied more fully nor more peremptorily than that scornful and imperial curl of the stranger's lips. Castanier turned away, took up fifty packets, each containing ten thousand francs in bank notes, and held them out to the stranger, receiving in exchange for them a bill accepted by the Baron de Nucingen. A sort of convulsive tremor ran through him as he saw a red gleam in the stranger's eyes when they fell on the forged signature on the letter of credit.

"It . . . it wants your signature . . ." stammered Castanier, handing back the bill.

"Hand me your pen," answered the Englishman.

Castanier handed him the pen with which he had just committed forgery. The stranger wrote *John Melmoth*, then he returned the slip of paper and the pen to the cashier. Castanier looked at the handwriting, noticing that it sloped from right to left in the Eastern fashion, and Melmoth disappeared so noiselessly that when Castanier looked up again an exclamation broke from him, partly because the man was no longer there, partly because he felt a strange painful sensation such as our imagination might take for an effect of poison.

The pen that Melmoth had handled sent the same sickening heat through him that an emetic produces. But it seemed impossible to Castanier that the Englishman should have guessed his crime. His inward qualms he attributed to the palpitation of the heart that, according to received ideas, was sure to follow at once on such a "turn" as the stranger had given him.

"The devil take it; I am very stupid. Providence is watching over me; for if that brute had come round to see my gentlemen to-morrow, my goose would have been cooked!" said Castanier, and he burned the unsuccessful attempts at forgery in the stove.

He put the bill that he meant to take with him in an envelope, and helped himself to five hundred thousand francs in French and English bank notes from the safe, which he locked. Then he put everything in order, lit a candle, blew out the lamp, took up his hat and umbrella, and went out sedately, as usual, to leave one of the two keys of the strong room with Madame de Nucingen, in the absence of her husband the baron.

"You are in luck, M. Castanier," said the banker's wife as he entered her room; "we have a holiday on Monday; you can go into the country, or to Soizy."

"Madame, will you be so good as to tell your husband that the bill of exchange on Watschildine, which was behind time, has just been presented? The five hundred thousand francs have been paid; so I shall not come back till noon on Tuesday."

"Good-by, monsieur; I hope you will have a pleasant time."

"The same to you, madame," replied the old dragoon as he went out. He glanced as he spoke at a young man well known in fashionable society at that time, a M. de Rastignac, who was regarded as Madame de Nucingen's lover.

"Madame," remarked this latter, "the old boy looks to me as if he meant to play you some ill turn."

"Pshaw! impossible; he is too stupid."

"Piquoizeau," said the cashier, walking into the porter's room, "what made you let anybody come up after four o'clock?"

"I have been smoking a pipe here in the doorway ever since four o'clock," said the man, "and nobody has gone into the bank. Nobody has come out either except the gentlemen——"

"Are you quite sure?"

"Yes, upon my word and honor. Stay, though, at four o'clock M. Werbrust's friend came, a young fellow from Messrs. du Tillet & Co., in the Rue Joubert."

"All right," said Castanier, and he hurried away.

The sickening sensation of heat that he had felt when he took back the pen returned in greater intensity. "*Mille diables*!" thought he, as he threaded his way along the Boulevard de Gand, "haven't I taken proper precautions? Let me think! Two clear days, Sunday and Monday, then a day of uncertainty before they begin to look for me; altogether, three days and four nights' respite. I have a couple of passports and two different disguises; is not that enough to throw the cleverest detective off the scent? On Tuesday morning I shall draw a million francs in London before the slightest suspicion has been aroused. My debts I am leaving behind for the benefit of my creditors, who will put a 'P'[1] on the bills, and I shall live comfortably in Italy for the rest of my days as the Conte Ferraro. I was alone with him when he died, poor fellow, in the marsh of Zembin, and I shall slip into his skin. . . . *Mille diables!* the woman who is to follow after me might give them a clew! Think of an old campaigner like me infatuated enough to tie myself to a petticoat tail! . . . Why take her? I must leave her behind. Yes, I could make up my mind to it; but—I know myself—I should be ass enough to go back for her. Still, nobody knows Aquilina. Shall I take her or leave her?"

"You will not take her!" cried a voice that filled Castanier with sickening dread. He turned sharply, and saw the Englishman.

[1] Protested.

"The devil is in it!" cried the cashier aloud.

Melmoth had passed his victim by this time; and if Castanier's first impulse had been to fasten a quarrel on a man who read his own thoughts, he was so much torn by opposing feelings that the immediate result was a temporary paralysis. When he resumed his walk he fell once more into that fever of irresolution which besets those who are so carried away by passion that they are ready to commit a crime, but have not sufficient strength of character to keep it to themselves without suffering terribly in the process. So, although Castanier had made up his mind to reap the fruits of a crime which was already half executed, he hesitated to carry out his designs. For him, as for many men of mixed character in whom weakness and strength are equally blended, the least trifling consideration determines whether they shall continue to lead blameless lives or become actively criminal. In the vast masses of men enrolled in Napoleon's armies there were many who, like Castanier, possessed the purely physical courage demanded on the battlefield, yet lacked the moral courage which makes a man as great in crime as he could have been in virtue.

The letter of credit was drafted in such terms that immediately on his arrival he might draw twenty-five thousand pounds on the firm of Watschildine, the London correspondents of the house of Nucingen. The London house had been already advised of the draft about to be made upon them; he had written to them himself. He had instructed an agent (chosen at random) to take his passage in a vessel which was to leave Portsmouth with a wealthy English family on board, who were going to Italy, and the passage money had been paid in the name of the Conte Ferraro. The smallest details of the scheme had been thought out. He had arranged matters so as to divert the search that would be made for him into Belgium and Switzerland, while he himself was at sea in the English vessel. Then, by the time that Nucingen might flatter himself that he was on the track of his late cashier, the said cashier, as

the Conte Ferraro, hoped to be safe in Naples. He had determined to disfigure his face in order to disguise himself the more completely, and by means of an acid to imitate the scars of smallpox. Yet, in spite of all these precautions, which surely seemed as if they must secure him complete immunity, his conscience tormented him; he was afraid. The even and peaceful life that he had led for so long had modified the morality of the camp. His life was stainless as yet; he could not sully it without a pang. So for the last time he abandoned himself to all the influences of the better self that strenuously resisted.

"Pshaw!" he said at last, at the corner of the Boulevard and the Rue Montmartre, "I will take a cab after the play this evening and go out to Versailles. A post-chaise will be ready for me at my old quartermaster's place. He would keep my secret even if a dozen men were standing ready to shoot him down. The chances are all in my favor, so far as I see; so I shall take my little Naqui with me, and I will go."

"You will not go!" exclaimed the Englishman, and the strange tones of his voice drove all the cashier's blood back to his heart.

Melmoth stepped into a tilbury which was waiting for him, and was whirled away so quickly, that when Castanier looked up he saw his foe some hundred paces away from him, and before it even crossed his mind to cut off the man's retreat the tilbury was far on its way up the Boulevard Montmartre.

"Well, upon my word, there is something supernatural about this!" said he to himself. "If I were fool enough to believe in God, I should think that He had set Saint Michael on my tracks. Suppose that the devil and the police should let me go on as I please, so as to nab me in the nick of time? Did anyone ever see the like! But there, this is folly. . . ."

Castanier went along the Rue du Faubourg-Montmartre, slackening his pace as he neared the Rue Richer. There, on the second floor of a block of buildings which looked

out upon some gardens, lived the unconscious cause of Castanier's crime—a young woman known in the quarter as Mme. de la Garde. A concise history of certain events in the cashier's past life must be given in order to explain these facts, and to give a complete presentment of the crisis when he yielded to temptation.

Mme. de la Garde said that she was a Piedmontese. No one, not even Castanier, knew her real name. She was one of those young girls who are driven by dire misery, by inability to earn a living, or by fear of starvation, to have recourse to a trade which most of them loathe, many regard with indifference, and some few follow in obedience to the laws of their constitution. But on the brink of the gulf of prostitution in Paris, the young girl of sixteen, beautiful and pure as the Madonna, had met with Castanier. The old dragoon was too rough and homely to make his way in society, and he was tired of tramping the boulevard at night and of the kind of conquests made there by gold. For some time past he had desired to bring a certain regularity into an irregular life. He was struck by the beauty of the poor child who had drifted by chance into his arms, and his determination to rescue her from the life of the streets was half benevolent, half selfish, as some of the thoughts of the best of men are apt to be. Social conditions mingle elements of evil with the promptings of natural goodness of heart, and the mixture of motives underlying a man's intentions should be leniently judged. Castanier had just cleverness enough to be very shrewd where his own interests were concerned. So he concluded to be a philanthropist on either count, and at first made her his mistress.

"Hey! hey!" he said to himself, in his soldierly fashion, "I am an old wolf, and a sheep shall not make a fool of me. Castanier, old man, before you set up housekeeping, reconnoiter the girl's character for a bit, and see if she is a steady sort."

This irregular union gave the Piedmontese a status the most nearly approaching respectability among those which

the world declines to recognize. During the first year she took the *nom de guerre* of Aquilina, one of the characters in *Venice Preserved* which she had chanced to read. She fancied that she resembled the courtesan in face and general appearance, and in a certain precocity of heart and brain of which she was conscious. When Castanier found that her life was as well regulated and virtuous as was possible for a social outlaw, he manifested a desire that they should live as husband and wife. So she took the name of Mme. de la Garde, in order to approach, as closely as Parisian usages permit, the conditions of a real marriage. As a matter of fact, many of these unfortunate girls have one fixed idea, to be looked upon as respectable middle-class women, who lead humdrum lives of faithfulness to their husbands; women who would make excellent mothers, keepers of household accounts, and menders of household linen. This longing springs from a sentiment so laudable that society should take it into consideration. But society, incorrigible as ever, will assuredly persist in regarding the married woman as a corvette duly authorized by her flag and papers to go on her own course, while the woman who is a wife in all but name is a pirate and an outlaw for lack of a document. A day came when Mme. de la Garde would fain have signed herself "Mme. Castanier." The cashier was put out by this.

"So you do not love me well enough to marry me?" she said.

Castanier did not answer; he was absorbed by his thoughts. The poor girl resigned herself to her fate. The ex-dragoon was in despair. Naqui's heart softened toward him at the sight of his trouble; she tried to soothe him, but what could she do when she did not know what ailed him? When Naqui made up her mind to know the secret, although she never asked him a question, the cashier dolefully confessed to the existence of a Mme. Castanier. This lawful wife, a thousand times accursed, was living in a humble way in Strasbourg on a small property there; he wrote to her twice a year, and kept the secret of her existence

so well, that no one suspected that he was married. The reason of this reticence? If it is familiar to many military men who may chance to be in a like predicament, it is perhaps worth while to give the story.

Your genuine trooper (if it is allowable here to employ the word which in the army signifies a man who is destined to die as a captain) is a sort of serf, a part and parcel of his regiment, an essentially simple creature, and Castanier was marked out by nature as a victim to the wiles of mothers with grown-up daughters left too long on their hands. It was at Nancy, during one of those brief intervals of repose when the Imperial armies were not on active service abroad, that Castanier was so unlucky as to pay some attention to a young lady with whom he danced at a *ridotto*, the provincial name for the entertainments often given by the military to the townsfolk, or *vice versâ*, in garrison towns. A scheme for inveigling the gallant captain into matrimony was immediately set on foot, one of those schemes by which mothers secure accomplices in a human heart by touching all its motive springs, while they convert all their friends into fellow-conspirators. Like all people possessed by one idea, these ladies press everything into the service of their great project, slowly elaborating their toils, much as the ant-lion excavates its funnel in the sand and lies in wait at the bottom for its victim. Suppose that no one strays, after all, into that carefully constructed labyrinth? Suppose that the ant-lion dies of hunger and thirst in her pit? Such things may be, but if any heedless creature once enters in, it never comes out. All the wires which could be pulled to induce action on the captain's part were tried; appeals were made to the secret interested motives that always come into play in such cases; they worked on Castanier's hopes and on the weaknesses and vanity of human nature. Unluckily, he had praised the daughter to her mother when he brought her back after a waltz, a little chat followed, and then an invitation in the most natural way in the world. Once introduced into the house, the dragoon was dazzled by the hospitality of a

family who appeared to conceal their real wealth beneath a show of careful economy. He was skillfully flattered on all sides, and everyone extolled for his benefit the various treasures there displayed. A neatly timed dinner, served on plate lent by an uncle, the attention shown to him by the only daughter of the house, the gossip of the town, a well-to-do sub-lieutenant who seemed likely to cut the ground from under his feet—all the innumerable snares, in short, of the provincial ant-lion were set for him, and to such good purpose, that Castanier said five years later, "To this day I do not know how it came about!"

The dragoon received fifteen thousand francs with the lady, who, after two years of marriage, became the ugliest and consequently the most peevish woman on earth. Luckily they had no children. The fair complexion (maintained by a Spartan regimen), the fresh, bright color in her face, which spoke of an engaging modesty, became overspread with blotches and pimples; her figure, which had seemed so straight, grew crooked, the angel became a suspicious and shrewish creature who drove Castanier frantic. Then the fortune took to itself wings. At length the dragoon, no longer recognizing the woman whom he had wedded, left her to live on a little property at Strasbourg, until the time when it should please God to remove her to adorn Paradise. She was one of those virtuous women who, for want of other occupation, would weary the life out of an angel with complainings, who pray till (if their prayers are heard in heaven) they must exhaust the patience of the Almighty, and say everything that is bad of their husbands in dove-like murmurs over a game of boston with their neighbors. When Aquilina learned all these troubles she clung still more affectionately to Castanier, and made him so happy, varying with woman's ingenuity the pleasures with which she filled his life, that all unwittingly she was the cause of the cashier's downfall.

Like many women who seem by nature destined to sound all the depths of love, Mme. de la Garde was disinterested. She asked neither for gold nor for jewelry, gave no

thought to the future, lived entirely for the present and for the pleasures of the present. She accepted expensive ornaments and dresses, the carriage so eagerly coveted by women of her class, as one harmony the more in the picture of life. There was absolutely no vanity in her desire not to appear at a better advantage but to look the fairer, and, moreover, no woman could live without luxuries more cheerfully. When a man of generous nature (and military men are mostly of this stamp) meets with such a woman, he feels a sort of exasperation at finding himself her debtor in generosity. He feels that he could stop a mail coach to obtain money for her if he has not sufficient for her whims. He will commit a crime if so he may be great and noble in the eyes of some woman or of his special public; such is the nature of the man. Such a lover is like a gambler who would be dishonored in his own eyes if he did not repay the sum he borrowed from a waiter in a gaming house; but will shrink from no crime, will leave his wife and children without a penny, and rob and murder, if so he may come to the gaming table with a full purse, and his honor remain untarnished among the frequenters of that fatal abode. So it was with Castanier.

He had begun by installing Aquilina in a modest fourth-floor dwelling, the furniture being of the simplest kind. But when he saw the girl's beauty and great qualities, when he had known inexpressible and unlooked-for happiness with her, he began to dote upon her, and longed to adorn his idol. Then Aquilina's toilet was so comically out of keeping with her poor abode, that for both their sakes it was clearly incumbent on him to move. The change swallowed up almost all Castanier's savings, for he furnished his domestic paradise with all the prodigality that is lavished on a kept mistress. A pretty woman must have everything pretty about her; the unity of charm in the woman and her surroundings singles her out from among her sex. This sentiment of homogeneity indeed, though it has frequently escaped the attention of observers, is instinctive in human nature; and the same prompting leads elderly spin-

sters to surround themselves with dreary relics of the past. But the lovely Piedmontese must have the newest and latest fashions, and all that was daintiest and prettiest in stuffs for hangings, in silks or jewelry, in fine china and other brittle and fragile wares. She asked for nothing; but when she was called upon to make a choice, when Castanier asked her, "Which do you like?" she would answer, "Why, this is the nicest!" Love never counts the cost, and Castanier therefore always took the "nicest."

When once the standard had been set up, there was nothing for it but everything in the household must be in conformity, from the linen, plate, and crystal through a thousand and one items of expenditure down to the pots and pans in the kitchen. Castanier had meant to "do things simply," as the saying goes, but he gradually found himself more and more in debt. One expense entailed another. The clock called for candle sconces. Fires must be lighted in the ornamental grates, but the curtains and hangings were too fresh and delicate to be soiled by smuts, so they must be replaced by patent and elaborate fireplaces, warranted to give out no smoke, recent inventions of the people who are clever at drawing up a prospectus. Then Aquilina found it so nice to run about barefooted on the carpet in her room that Castanier must have soft carpets laid everywhere for the pleasure of playing with Naqui. A bathroom, too, was built for her, everything to the end that she might be more comfortable.

Shopkeepers, workmen, and manufacturers in Paris have a mysterious knack of enlarging a hole in a man's purse. They cannot give the price of anything upon inquiry; and as the paroxysm of longing cannot abide delay, orders are given by the feeble light of an approximate estimate of cost. The same people never send in the bills at once, but ply the purchaser with furniture till his head spins. Everything is so pretty, so charming; and everyone is satisfied.

A few months later the obliging furniture dealers are metamorphosed, and reappear in the shape of alarming totals on invoices that fill the soul with their horrid clamor;

they are in urgent want of the money; they are, as you may say, on the brink of bankruptcy, their tears flow, it is heartrending to hear them! And then—the gulf yawns, and gives up serried columns of figures marching four deep, when as a matter of fact they should have issued innocently three by three.

Before Castanier had any idea of how much he had spent, he had arranged for Aquilina to have a carriage from a livery stable when she went out, instead of a cab. Castanier was a gourmand; he engaged an excellent cook; and Aquilina, to please him, had herself made the purchases of early fruit and vegetables, rare delicacies, and exquisite wines. But, as Aquilina had nothing of her own, these gifts of hers, so precious by reason of the thought and tact and graciousness that prompted them, were no less a drain upon Castanier's purse; he did not like his Naqui to be without money, and Naqui could not keep money in her pocket. So the table was a heavy item of expenditure for a man with Castanier's income. The ex-dragoon was compelled to resort to various shifts for obtaining money, for he could not bring himself to renounce this delightful life. He loved the woman too well to cross the freaks of the mistress. He was one of those men who, through self-love or through weakness of character, can refuse nothing to a woman; false shame overpowers them, and they rather face ruin than make the admissions: "I cannot——" "My means will not permit——" "I cannot afford——"

When, therefore, Castanier saw that if he meant to emerge from the abyss of debt into which he had plunged, he must part with Aquilina and live upon bread and water, he was so unable to do without her or to change his habits of life, that daily he put off his plans of reform until the morrow. The debts were pressing, and he began by borrowing money. His position and previous character inspired confidence, and of this he took advantage to devise a system of borrowing money as he required it. Then, as the total amount of debt rapidly increased, he had recourse

to those commercial inventions known as *accommodation bills*. This form of bill does not represent goods or other value received, and the first indorser pays the amount named for the obliging person who accepts it. This species of fraud is tolerated because it is impossible to detect it, and, moreover, it is an imaginary fraud which only becomes real if payment is ultimately refused.

When at length it was evidently impossible to borrow any longer, whether because the amount of the debt was now so greatly increased, or because Castanier was unable to pay the large amount of interest on the aforesaid sums of money, the cashier saw bankruptcy before him. On making this discovery, he decided for a fraudulent bankruptcy rather than an ordinary failure, and preferred a crime to a misdemeanor. He determined, after the fashion of the celebrated cashier of the Royal Treasury, to abuse the trust deservedly won, and to increase the number of his creditors by making a final loan of the sum sufficient to keep him in comfort in a foreign country for the rest of his days. All this, as has been seen, he had prepared to do.

Aquilina knew nothing of the irksome cares of this life; she enjoyed her existence, as many a woman does, making no inquiry as to where the money came from, even as sundry other folk will eat their buttered rolls untroubled by any restless spirit of curiosity as to the culture and growth of wheat; but as the labor and miscalculations of agriculture lie on the other side of the baker's oven, so, beneath the unappreciated luxury of many a Parisian household lie intolerable anxieties and exorbitant toil.

While Castanier was enduring the torture of the strain, and his thoughts were full of the deed that should change his whole life, Aquilina was lying luxuriously back in a great armchair by the fireside, beguiling the time by chatting with her waiting-maid. As frequently happens in such cases, the maid had become the mistress's confidante, Jenny having first assured herself that her mistress's ascendancy over Castanier was complete.

"What are we to do this evening? Léon seems deter-

mined to come," Mme. de la Garde was saying, as she read a passionate epistle indicted upon a faint gray note paper.

"Here is the master!" said Jenny.

Castanier came in. Aquilina, nowise disconcerted, crumpled up the letter, took it with the tongs, and held it in the flames.

"So that is what you do with your love letters, is it?" asked Castanier.

"Oh, goodness, yes," said Aquilina; "is it not the best way of keeping them safe? Besides, fire should go to the fire, as water makes for the river."

"You are talking as if it were a real love letter, Naqui——"

"Well, am I not handsome enough to receive them?" she said, holding up her forehead for a kiss. There was a carelessness in her manner that would have told any man less blind than Castanier that it was only a piece of conjugal duty, as it were, to give this joy to the cashier; but use and wont had brought Castanier to the point where clear-sightedness is no longer possible for love.

"I have taken a box at the Gymnase this evening," he said; "let us have dinner early, and then we need not dine in a hurry."

"Go and take Jenny. I am tired of plays. I do not know what is the matter with me this evening; I would rather stay here by the fire."

"Come, all the same though, Naqui; I shall not be here to bore you much longer. Yes, Quiqui, I am going to start to-night, and it will be some time before I come back again. I am leaving everything in your charge. Will you keep your heart for me too?"

"Neither my heart nor anything else," she said; "but when you come back again, Naqui will still be Naqui for you."

"Well, this is frankness. So you would not follow me?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Eh! why, how can I leave the lover who writes me

such sweet little notes?" she asked, pointing to the blackened scrap of paper with a mocking smile.

"Is there any truth in it?" asked Castanier. "Have you really a lover?"

"Really!" cried Aquilina; "and have you never given it a serious thought, dear? To begin with, you are fifty years old. Then you have just the sort of face to put on a fruit stall; if the woman tried to sell you for a pumpkin, no one would contradict her. You puff and blow like a seal when you come upstairs; your paunch rises and falls like the diamond on a woman's forehead! It is pretty plain that you served in the dragoons; you are a very ugly-looking old man. Fiddle-de-dee. If you have any mind to keep my respect, I recommend you not to add imbecility to these qualities by imagining that such a girl as I am will be content with your asthmatic love, and not look for youth and good looks and pleasure by way of variety——"

"Aquilina! you are laughing, of course?"

"Oh, very well; and are you not laughing too? Do you take me for a fool, telling me that you are going away? 'I am going to start to-night!'" she said, mimicking his tones. "Stuff and nonsense! Would you talk like that if you were really going away from your Naqui? You would cry, like the booby that you are!"

"After all, if I go, will you follow?" he asked.

"Tell me first whether this journey of yours is a bad joke or not."

"Yes, seriously, I am going."

"Well, then, seriously, I shall stay. A pleasant journey to you, my boy! I will wait till you come back. I would sooner take leave of life than take leave of my dear, cozy Paris——"

"Will you not come to Italy, to Naples, and lead a pleasant life there—a delicious, luxurious life, with this stout old fogey of yours, who puffs and blows like a seal?"

"No."

"Ungrateful girl!"

"Ungrateful?" she cried, rising to her feet. "I might leave this house this moment and take nothing out of it but myself. I shall have given you all the treasures a young girl can give, and something that not every drop in your veins and mine can ever give me back. If, by any means whatever, by selling my hopes of eternity, for instance, I could recover my past self, body as soul (for I have, perhaps, redeemed my soul), and be pure as a lily for my lover, I would not hesitate a moment! What sort of devotion has rewarded mine? You have housed and fed me, just as you give a dog food and a kennel because he is a protection to the house, and he may take kicks when we are out of humor, and lick our hands as soon as we are pleased to call to him. And which of us two will have been the more generous?"

"Oh! dear child, do you not see that I am joking?" returned Castanier. "I am going on a short journey; I shall not be away for very long. But come with me to the Gymnase; I shall start just before midnight, after I have had time to say good-by to you."

"Poor pet! so you are really going, are you?" she said. She put her arms round his neck, and drew down his head against her bodice.

"You are smothering me!" cried Castanier, with his face buried in Aquilina's breast. That damsel turned to say in Jenny's ear, "Go to Léon, and tell him not to come till one o'clock. If you do not find him, and he comes here during the leave-taking, keep him in your room.—Well," she went on, setting free Castanier, and giving a tweak to the tip of his nose, "never mind, handsomest of seals that you are. I will go to the theater with you this evening. But all in good time; let us have dinner! There is a nice little dinner for you—just what you like."

"It is very hard to part from such a woman as you!" exclaimed Castanier.

"Very well then, why do you go?" asked she.

"Ah! why? why? If I were to begin to explain the reasons why, I must tell you things that would prove to

you that I love you almost to madness. Ah! if you have sacrificed your honor for me, I have sold mine for you; we are quits. Is that love?"

"What is all this about?" said she. "Come, now, promise me that if I had a lover you would still love me as a father; that would be love! Come, now, promise it at once, and give us your fist upon it."

"I should kill you," and Castanier smiled as he spoke.

They sat down to the dinner table, and went thence to the Gymnase. When the first part of the performance was over, it occurred to Castanier to show himself to some of his acquaintances in the house, so as to turn away any suspicion of his departure. He left Mme. de la Garde in the corner box where she was seated, according to her modest wont, and went to walk up and down in the lobby. He had not gone many paces before he saw the Englishman, and with a sudden return of the sickening sensation of heat that once before had vibrated through him, and of the terror that he had felt already, he stood face to face with Melmoth.

"Forger!"

At the word, Castanier glanced round at the people who were moving about them. He fancied that he could see astonishment and curiosity in their eyes, and wishing to be rid of this Englishman at once, he raised his hand to strike him—and felt his arm paralyzed by some invisible power that sapped his strength and nailed him to the spot. He allowed the stranger to take him by the arm, and they walked together to the greenroom like two friends.

"Who is strong enough to resist me?" said the Englishman, addressing him. "Do you not know that everything here on earth must obey me, that it is in my power to do everything? I read men's thoughts, I see the future, and I know the past. I am here, and I can be elsewhere also. Time and space and distance are nothing to me. The whole world is at my beck and call. I have the power of continual enjoyment and of giving joy. I can see through walls, discover hidden treasures, and fill my hands with

them. Palaces arise at my nod, and my architect makes no mistakes. I can make all lands break forth into blossom, heap up their gold and precious stones, and surround myself with fair women and ever new faces; everything is yielded up to my will. I could gamble on the Stock Exchange, and my speculations would be infallible; but a man who can find the hoards that misers have hidden in the earth need not trouble himself about stocks. Feel the strength of the hand that grasps you; poor wretch, doomed to shame! Try to bend the arm of iron! try to soften the adamantine heart! Fly from me if you dare! You would hear my voice in the depths of the caves that lie under the Seine; you might hide in the Catacombs, but would you not see me there? My voice could be heard through the sound of the thunder, my eyes shine as brightly as the sun, for I am the peer of Lucifer!"

Castanier heard the terrible words, and felt no protest nor contradiction within himself. He walked side by side with the Englishman, and had no power to leave him.

"You are mine; you have just committed a crime. I have found at last the mate whom I have sought. Have you a mind to learn your destiny? Aha! you came here to see a play, and you shall see a play—nay, two. Come. Present me to Mme. de la Garde as one of your best friends. Am I not your last hope of escape?"

Castanier, followed by the stranger, returned to his box; and in accordance with the order he had just received, he hastened to introduce Melmoth to Mme. de la Garde. Aquilina seemed to be not in the least surprised. The Englishman declined to take a seat in front, and Castanier was once more beside his mistress; the man's slightest wish must be obeyed. The last piece was about to begin, for, at that time, small theaters only gave three pieces. One of the actors had made the Gymnase the fashion, and that evening Perlet (the actor in question) was to play in a vaudeville called *Le Comédien d'Étampes*, in which he filled four different parts.

When the curtain rose, the stranger stretched out his

hand over the crowded house. Castanier's cry of terror died away, for the walls of his throat seemed glued together as Melmoth pointed to the stage, and the cashier knew that the play had been changed at the Englishman's desire.

He saw the strong room at the bank; he saw the Baron de Nucingen in conference with a police officer from the prefecture, who was informing him of Castanier's conduct, explaining that the cashier had absconded with money taken from the safe, giving the history of the forged signature. The information was put in writing; the document signed and duly dispatched to the public prosecutor.

"Are we in time, do you think?" asked Nucingen.

"Yes," said the agent of police; "he is at the Gymnase, and has no suspicion of anything."

Castanier fidgeted on his chair, and made as if he would leave the theater, but Melmoth's hand lay on his shoulder, and he was obliged to sit and watch; the hideous power of the man produced an effect like that of nightmare, and he could not move a limb. Nay, the man himself was the nightmare; his presence weighed heavily on his victim like a poisoned atmosphere. When the wretched cashier turned to implore the Englishman's mercy, he met those blazing eyes that discharged electric currents, which pierced through him and transfixed him like darts of steel.

"What have I done to you?" he said, in his prostrate helplessness, and he breathed hard like a stag at the water's edge. "What do you want of me?"

"Look!" cried Melmoth.

Castanier looked at the stage. The scene had been changed. The play seemed to be over, and Castanier beheld himself stepping from the carriage with Aquilina; but as he entered the courtyard of the house in the Rue Richer, the scene again was suddenly changed, and he saw his own house. Jenny was chatting by the fire in her mistress's room with a subaltern officer of a line regiment then stationed at Paris.

"He is going, is he?" said the sergeant, who seemed to

belong to a family in easy circumstances; "I can be happy at my ease! I love Aquilina too well to allow her to belong to that old toad! I, myself, am going to marry Mme. de la Garde!" cried the sergeant.

"Old toad!" Castanier murmured piteously.

"Here come the master and mistress; hide yourself! Stay, get in here, Monsieur Léon," said Jenny. "The master won't stay here for very long."

Castanier watched the sergeant hide himself among Aquilina's gowns in her dressing room. Almost immediately he himself appeared upon the scene, and took leave of his mistress, who made fun of him in "asides" to Jenny, while she uttered the sweetest and tenderest words in his ears. She wept with one side of her face, and laughed with the other. The audience called for an encore.

"Accursed creature!" cried Castanier from his box.

Aquilina was laughing till the tears came into her eyes.

"Goodness!" she cried, "how funny Perlet is as the Englishwoman! . . . Why don't you laugh? Everyone else in the house is laughing. Laugh, dear!" she said to Castanier.

Melmoth burst out laughing, and the unhappy cashier shuddered. The Englishman's laughter wrung his heart and tortured his brain; it was as if a surgeon had bored his skull with a red-hot iron.

"Laughing! are they laughing?" stammered Castanier.

He did not see the prim English lady whom Perlet was acting with such ludicrous effect, nor hear the English-French that had filled the house with roars of laughter; instead of all this, he beheld himself hurrying from the Rue Richer, hailing a cab on the Boulevard, bargaining with the man to take him to Versailles. Then once more the scene changed. He recognized the sorry inn at the corner of the Rue de l'Orangerie and the Rue des Récollets, which was kept by his old quartermaster. It was two o'clock in the morning, the most perfect stillness prevailed, no one was there to watch his movements. The post-horses were put into the carriage (it came from a house in the Avenue

de Paris in which an Englishman lived, and had been ordered in the foreigner's name to avoid raising suspicion). Castanier saw that he had his bills and his passports, stepped into the carriage, and set out. But at the barrier he saw two gendarmes lying in wait for the carriage. A cry of horror burst from him, but Melmoth gave him a glance, and again the sound died in his throat.

"Keep your eyes on the stage, and be quiet!" said the Englishman.

In another moment Castanier saw himself flung into prison at the Conciergerie; and in the fifth act of the drama, entitled *The Cashier*, he saw himself, in three months' time, condemned to twenty years of penal servitude. Again a cry broke from him. He was exposed upon the Place du Palais-de-Justice, and the executioner branded him with a red-hot iron. Then came the last scene of all; among some sixty convicts in the prison yard of the Bicêtre, he was awaiting his turn to have the irons riveted on his limbs.

"Dear me! I cannot laugh any more! . . ." said Aquilina. "You are very solemn, dear boy; what can be the matter? The gentleman has gone."

"A word with you, Castanier," said Melmoth when the piece was at an end, and the attendant was fastening Mme. de la Garde's cloak.

The corridor was crowded, and escape impossible.

"Very well, what is it?"

"No human power can hinder you from taking Aquilina home, and going next to Versailles, there to be arrested."

"How so?"

"Because you are in a hand that will never relax its grasp," returned the Englishman.

Castanier longed for the power to utter some word that should blot him out from among living men and hide him in the lowest depths of hell.

"Suppose that the devil were to make a bid for your soul, would you not give it to him now in exchange for the power of God? One single word, and those five hundred thousand francs shall be back in the Baron de Nu-

cingen's safe; then you can tear up your letter of credit, and all traces of your crime will be obliterated. Moreover, you would have gold in torrents. You hardly believe in anything perhaps? Well, if all this comes to pass, you will believe at least in the devil."

"If it were only possible!" said Castanier joyfully.

"The man who can do it all gives you his word that it is possible," answered the Englishman.

Melmoth, Castanier, and Mme. de la Garde were standing out in the Boulevard when Melmoth raised his arm. A drizzling rain was falling, the streets were muddy, the air was close, there was thick darkness overhead; but in a moment, as the arm was outstretched, Paris was filled with sunlight; it was high noon on a bright July day. The trees were covered with leaves; a double stream of joyous holiday makers strolled beneath them. Sellers of licorice water shouted their cool drinks. Splendid carriages rolled past along the streets. A cry of terror broke from the cashier, and at that cry rain and darkness once more settled down upon the Boulevard.

Mme. de la Garde had stepped into the carriage. "Do be quick, dear!" she cried; "either come in or stay out. Really, you are as dull as ditch-water this evening——"

"What must I do?" Castanier asked of Melmoth.

"Would you like to take my place?" inquired the Englishman.

"Yes."

"Very well, then; I will be at your house in a few moments."

"By the bye, Castanier, you are rather off your balance," Aquilina remarked. "There is some mischief brewing; you were quite melancholy and thoughtful all through the play. Do you want anything that I can give you, dear? Tell me."

"I am waiting till we are at home to know whether you love me."

"You need not wait till then," she said, throwing her arms round his neck. "There!" she said, as she embraced

him, passionately to all appearance, and plied him with the coaxing caresses that are part of the business of such a life as hers, like stage action for an actress.

"Where is the music?" asked Castanier.

"What next? Only think of your hearing music now!"

"Heavenly music!" he went on. "The sounds seem to come from above."

"What? You have always refused to give me a box at the Italiens because you could not abide music, and are you turning music-mad at this time of day? Mad—that you are! The music is inside your own noddle, old addle-pate!" she went on, as she took his head in her hands and rocked it to and fro on her shoulder. "Tell me now, old man; isn't it the creaking of the wheels that sings in your ears?"

"Just listen, Naqui! If the angels make music for God Almighty, it must be such music as this that I am drinking in at every pore, rather than hearing. I do not know how to tell you about it; it is as sweet as honey water!"

"Why, of course, they have music in heaven, for the angels in all the pictures have harps in their hands. He is mad, upon my word!" she said to herself, as she saw Castanier's attitude; he looked like an opium eater in a blissful trance.

They reached the house. Castanier, absorbed by the thought of all that he had just heard and seen, knew not whether to believe it or no; he was like a drunken man, and utterly unable to think connectedly. He came to himself in Aquilina's room, whither he had been supported by the united efforts of his mistress, the porter, and Jenny; for he had fainted as he stepped from the carriage.

"*He* will be here directly! Oh, my friends, my friends!" he cried, and he flung himself despairingly into the depths of a low chair beside the fire.

Jenny heard the bell as he spoke, and admitted the Englishman. She announced that "a gentleman had come who had made an appointment with the master," when Melmoth suddenly appeared, and deep silence followed. He looked

at the porter—the porter went; he looked at Jenny—and Jenny went likewise.

"Madame," said Melmoth, turning to Aquilina, "with your permission, we will conclude a piece of urgent business."

He took Castanier's hand, and Castanier rose, and the two men went into the drawing-room. There was no light in the room, but Melmoth's eyes lit up the thickest darkness. The gaze of those strange eyes had left Aquilina like one spellbound; she was helpless, unable to take any thought for her lover; moreover, she believed him to be safe in Jenny's room, whereas their early return had taken the waiting woman by surprise, and she had hidden the officer in the dressing room. It had all happened exactly as in the drama that Melmoth had displayed for his victim. Presently the house door was slammed violently, and Castanier reappeared.

"What ails you?" cried the horror-struck Aquilina.

There was a change in the cashier's appearance. A strange pallor overspread his once rubicund countenance; it wore the peculiarly sinister and stony look of the mysterious visitor. The sullen glare of his eyes was intolerable, the fierce light in them seemed to scorch. The man who had looked so good-humored and good-natured had suddenly grown tyrannical and proud. The courtesan thought that Castanier had grown thinner; there was a terrible majesty in his brow; it was as if a dragon breathed forth a malignant influence that weighed upon the others like a close, heavy atmosphere. For a moment Aquilina knew not what to do.

"What passed between you and that diabolical-looking man in those few minutes?" she asked at length.

"I have sold my soul to him. I feel it; I am no longer the same. He has taken my *self*, and given me his soul in exchange."

"What?"

"You would not understand it at all. . . . Ah! he was right," Castanier went on, "the fiend was right! I see

everything and know all things.—You have been deceiving me!"

Aquilina turned cold with terror. Castanier lighted a candle and went into the dressing room. The unhappy girl followed him in dazed bewilderment, and great was her astonishment when Castanier drew the dresses that hung there aside and disclosed the sergeant.

"Come out, my boy," said the cashier; and, taking Léon by a button of his overcoat, he drew the officer into his room.

The Piedmontese, haggard and desperate, had flung herself into her easy chair. Castanier seated himself on a sofa by the fire, and left Aquilina's lover in a standing position.

"You have been in the army," said Léon; "I am ready to give you satisfaction."

"You are a fool," said Castanier dryly. "I have no occasion to fight. I could kill you by a look if I had any mind to do it. I will tell you what it is, youngster; why should I kill you? I can see a red line round your neck —the guillotine is waiting for you. Yes, you will end in the Place de Grève. You are the headsman's property! there is no escape for you. You belong to a *vendita* of the Carbonari. You are plotting against the Government."

"You did not tell me that," cried the Piedmontese, turning to Léon.

"So you do not know that the Minister decided this morning to put down your Society?" the cashier continued. "The Procureur-Général has a list of your names. You have been betrayed. They are busy drawing up the indictment at this moment."

"Then was it you who betrayed him?" cried Aquilina, and with a hoarse sound in her throat like the growl of a tigress she rose to her feet; she seemed as if she would tear Castanier in pieces.

"You know me too well to believe it," Castanier retorted. Aquilina was benumbed by his coolness.

"Then how did you know it?" she murmured.

"I did not know it until I went into the drawing-room;

now I know it—now I see and know all things, and can do all things."

The sergeant was overcome with amazement.

"Very well then, save him, save him, dear!" cried the girl, flinging herself at Castanier's feet. "If nothing is impossible to you, save him! I will love you, I will adore you, I will be your slave and not your mistress. I will obey your wildest whims; you shall do as you will with me. Yes, yes, I will give you more than love; you shall have a daughter's devotion as well as . . . Rodolphe! why will you not understand! After all, however violent my passions may be, I shall be yours forever! What should I say to persuade you? I will invent pleasures . . . I . . . Great heavens! one moment! whatever you shall ask of me—to fling myself from the window, for instance—you will need to say but one word, 'Léon!' and I will plunge down into hell. I would bear any torture, any pain of body or soul, anything you might inflict upon me!"

Castanier heard her with indifference. For all answer, he indicated Léon to her with a fiendish laugh.

"The guillotine is waiting for him," he repeated.

"No, no, no! He shall not leave this house. I will save him!" she cried. "Yes; I will kill anyone who lays a finger upon him! Why will you not save him?" she shrieked aloud; her eyes were blazing, her hair unbound. "Can you save him?"

"I can do everything."

"Why do you not save him?"

"Why?" shouted Castanier, and his voice made the ceiling ring.—"Eh! it is my revenge! Doing evil is my trade!"

"Die?" said Aquilina; "must he die, my lover? Is it possible?"

She sprang up and snatched a stiletto from a basket that stood on the chest of drawers and went to Castanier, who began to laugh.

"You know very well that steel cannot hurt me now——"

Aquilina's arm suddenly dropped like a snapped harp string.

"Out with you, my good friend," said the cashier, turning to the sergeant, "and go about your business."

He held out his hand; the other felt Castanier's superior power, and could not choose but obey.

"This house is mine; I could send for the commissary of police if I chose, and give you up as a man who has hidden himself on my premises, but I would rather let you go; I am a fiend, I am not a spy."

"I shall follow him!" said Aquilina.

"Then follow him," returned Castanier. — "Here, Jenny——"

Jenny appeared.

"Tell the porter to hail a cab for them.—Here, Naqui," said Castanier, drawing a bundle of banknotes from his pocket; "you shall not go away like a pauper from a man who loves you still."

He held out three hundred thousand francs. Aquilina took the notes, flung them on the floor, spat on them, and trampled upon them in a frenzy of despair.

"We will leave this house on foot," she cried, "without a farthing of your money.—Jenny, stay where you are."

"Good evening!" answered the cashier, as he gathered up the notes again. "I have come back from my journey. —Jenny," he added, looking at the bewildered waiting maid, "you seem to me to be a good sort of girl. You have no mistress now. Come here. This evening you shall have a master."

Aquilina, who felt safe nowhere, went at once with the sergeant to the house of one of her friends. But all Léon's movements were suspiciously watched by the police, and after a time he and three of his friends were arrested. The whole story may be found in the newspapers of that day.

Castanier felt that he had undergone a mental as well as a physical transformation. The Castanier of old no longer existed—the boy, the young Lothario, the soldier who had

proved his courage, who had been tricked into a marriage and disillusioned, the cashier, the passionate lover who had committed a crime for Aquilina's sake. His inmost nature had suddenly asserted itself. His brain had expanded, his senses had developed. His thoughts comprehended the whole world; he saw all the things of earth as if he had been raised to some high pinnacle above the world.

Until that evening at the play he had loved Aquilina to distraction. Rather than give her up he would have shut his eyes to her infidelities; and now all that blind passion had passed away as a cloud vanishes in the sunlight.

Jenny was delighted to succeed to her mistress's position and fortune, and did the cashier's will in all things; but Castanier, who could read the inmost thoughts of the soul, discovered the real motive underlying this purely physical devotion. He amused himself with her, however, like a mischievous child who greedily sucks the juice of the cherry and flings away the stone. The next morning at breakfast time, when she was fully convinced that she was a lady and the mistress of the house, Castanier uttered one by one the thoughts that filled her mind as she drank her coffee.

"Do you know what you are thinking, child?" he said, smiling. "I will tell you: 'So all that lovely rosewood furniture that I coveted so much, and the pretty dresses that I used to try on, are mine now! All on easy terms that madame refused, I do not know why. My word! if I might drive about in a carriage, have jewels and pretty things, a box at the theater, and put something by! with me he should lead a life of pleasure fit to kill him if he were not as strong as a Turk! I never saw such a man!'—Was not that just what you were thinking?" he went on, and something in his voice made Jenny turn pale. "Well, yes, child; you could not stand it, and I am sending you away for your own good; you would perish in the attempt. Come, let us part good friends," and he coolly dismissed her with a very small sum of money.

The first use that Castanier had promised himself that he would make of the terrible power bought at the price

of his eternal happiness, was the full and complete indulgence of all his tastes.

He first put his affairs in order, readily settled his account with M. de Nucingen, who found a worthy German to succeed him, and then determined on a carouse worthy of the palmiest days of the Roman Empire. He plunged into dissipation as recklessly as Belshazzar of old went to that last feast in Babylon. Like Belshazzar, he saw clearly through his revels a gleaming hand that traced his doom in letters of flame, not on the narrow walls of the banqueting chamber, but over the vast spaces of heaven that the rainbow spans. His feast was not, indeed, an orgy confined within the limits of a banquet, for he squandered all the powers of soul and body in exhausting all the pleasures of earth. The table was in some sort earth itself, the earth that trembled beneath his feet. He was the last festival of the reckless spendthrift who has thrown all prudence to the winds. The devil had given him the key of the storehouse of human pleasures; he had filled and refilled his hands, and he was fast nearing the bottom. In a moment he had felt all that that enormous power could accomplish; in a moment he had exercised it, proved it, wearied of it. What had hitherto been the sum of human desires became as nothing. So often it happens that with possession the vast poetry of desire must end, and the thing possessed is seldom the thing that we dreamed of.

Beneath Melmoth's omnipotence lurked this tragical anticlimax of so many a passion, and now the inanity of human nature was revealed to his successor, to whom infinite power brought Nothingness as a dowry.

To come to a clear understanding of Castanier's strange position, it must be borne in mind how suddenly these revolutions of thought and feeling had been wrought; how quickly they had succeeded each other; and of these things it is hard to give any idea to those who have never broken the prison bonds of time, and space, and distance. His relation to the world without had been entirely changed with the expansion of his faculties.

Like Melmoth himself, Castanier could travel in a few moments over the fertile plains of India, could soar on the wings of demons above African desert spaces, or skim the surface of the seas. The same insight that could read the inmost thoughts of others, could apprehend at a glance the nature of any material object, just as he caught as it were all flavors at once upon his tongue. He took his pleasure like a despot; a blow of the ax felled the tree that he might eat its fruits. The transitions, the alternations that measure joy and pain, and diversify human happiness, no longer existed for him. He had so completely glutted his appetites that pleasure must overpass the limits of pleasure to tickle a palate cloyed with satiety, and suddenly grown fastidious beyond all measure, so that ordinary pleasures became distasteful. Conscious that at will he was the master of all the women that he could desire, knowing that his power was irresistible, he did not care to exercise it; they were pliant to his unexpressed wishes, to his most extravagant caprices, until he felt a horrible thirst for love, and would have love beyond their power to give.

The world refused him nothing save faith and prayer, the soothing and consoling love that is not of this world. He was obeyed—it was a horrible position.

The torrents of pain, and pleasure, and thought that shook his soul and his bodily frame would have overwhelmed the strongest human being; but in him there was a power of vitality proportioned to the power of the sensations that assailed him. He felt within him a vague immensity of longing that earth could not satisfy. He spent his days on outspread wings, longing to traverse the luminous fields of space to other spheres that he knew afar by intuitive perception, a clear and hopeless knowledge. His soul dried up within him, for he hungered and thirsted after things that can neither be drunk nor eaten, but for which he could not choose but crave. His lips, like Melmoth's, burned with desire; he panted for the unknown, for he knew all things.

The mechanism and the scheme of the world was ap-

parent to him, and its working interested him no longer; he did not long disguise the profound scorn that makes of a man of extraordinary powers a sphinx who knows everything and says nothing, and sees all things with an unmoved countenance. He felt not the slightest wish to communicate his knowledge to other men. He was rich with all the wealth of the world, with one effort he could make the circle of the globe, and riches and power were meaningless for him. He felt the awful melancholy of omnipotence, a melancholy which Satan and God relieve by the exercise of infinite power in mysterious ways known to them alone. Castanier had not, like his Master, the inextinguishable energy of hate and malice; he felt that he was a devil, but a devil whose time was not yet come, while Satan is a devil through all eternity, and being damned beyond redemption, delights to stir up the world, like a dungheap, with his triple fork and to thwart therein the designs of God. But Castanier, for his misfortune, had one hope left.

If in a moment he could move from one pole to the other as a bird springs restlessly from side to side in its cage, when, like the bird, he had crossed his prison, he saw the vast immensity of space beyond it. That vision of the Infinite left him forever unable to see humanity and its affairs as other men saw them. The insensate fools who long for the power of the Devil gauge its desirability from a human standpoint; they do not see that with the Devil's power they will likewise assume his thoughts, and that they will be doomed to remain as men among creatures who will no longer understand them. The Nero unknown to history who dreams of setting Paris on fire for his private entertainment, like an exhibition of a burning house on the boards of a theater, does not suspect that if he had that power, Paris would become for him as little interesting as an ant heap by the roadside to a hurrying passer-by. The circle of the sciences was for Castanier something like a logogriph for a man who does not know the key to it. Kings and Governments were despicable in his eyes. His great debauch had been in some sort a deplorable farewell

to his life as a man. The earth had grown too narrow for him, for the infernal gifts laid bare for him the secrets of creation—he saw the cause and foresaw its end. He was shut out from all that men call "heaven" in all languages under the sun; he could no longer think of heaven.

Then he came to understand the look on his predecessor's face and the drying up of the life within; then he knew all that was meant by the baffled hope that gleamed in Melmoth's eyes; he, too, knew the thirst that burned those red lips, and the agony of a continual struggle between two natures grown to giant size. Even yet he might be an angel, and he knew himself to be a fiend. His was the fate of a sweet and gentle creature that a wizard's malice has imprisoned in a misshapen form, entrapping it by a pact, so that another's will must set it free from its detested envelope.

As a deception only increases the ardor with which a man of really great nature explores the infinite of sentiment in a woman's heart, so Castanier awoke to find that one idea lay like a weight upon his soul, an idea which was perhaps the key to loftier spheres. The very fact that he had bartered away his eternal happiness led him to dwell in thought upon the future of those who pray and believe. On the morrow of his debauch, when he entered into the sober possession of his power, this idea made him feel himself a prisoner; he knew the burden of the woe that poets, and prophets, and great oracles of faith have set forth for us in such mighty words; he felt the point of the Flaming Sword plunged into his side, and hurried in search of Melmoth. What had become of his predecessor?

The Englishman was living in a mansion in the Rue Férou, near Saint-Sulpice—a gloomy, dark, damp, and cold abode. The Rue Férou itself is one of the most dismal streets in Paris; it has a north aspect like all the streets that lie at right angles to the left bank of the Seine, and the houses are in keeping with the site. As Castanier stood on the threshold he found that the door itself, like the vaulted roof, was hung with black; rows of lighted tapers

shone brilliantly as though some king were lying in state; and a priest stood on either side of a catafalque that had been raised there.

"There is no need to ask why you have come, sir," the old hall porter said to Castanier; "you are so like our poor dear master that is gone. But if you are his brother, you have come too late to bid him good-by. The good gentleman died the night before last."

"How did he die?" Castanier asked of one of the priests.

"Set your mind at rest," said an old priest; he partly raised as he spoke the black pall that covered the catafalque.

Castanier, looking at him, saw one of those faces that faith has made sublime; the soul seemed to shine forth from every line of it, bringing light and warmth for other men, kindled by the unfailing charity within. This was Sir John Melmoth's confessor.

"Your brother made an end that men may envy, and that must rejoice the angels. Do you know what joy there is in heaven over a sinner that repents? His tears of penitence, excited by grace, flowed without ceasing; death alone checked them. The Holy Spirit dwelt in him. His burning words, full of lively faith, were worthy of the Prophet-King. If, in the course of my life, I have never heard a more dreadful confession than from the lips of this Irish gentleman, I have likewise never heard such fervent and passionate prayers. However great the measures of his sins may have been, his repentance has filled the abyss to overflowing. The hand of God was visibly stretched out above him, for he was completely changed, there was such heavenly beauty in his face. The hard eyes were softened by tears; the resonant voice that struck terror into those who heard it took the tender and compassionate tones of those who themselves have passed through deep humiliation. He so edified those who heard his words that some who had felt drawn to see the spectacle of a Christian's death fell on their knees as he spoke of heavenly things, and of the infinite glory of God, and gave thanks and praise to Him. If he is leaving no worldly wealth to his family,

no family can possess a greater blessing than this that he surely gained for them, a soul among the blessed, who will watch over you all and direct you in the path to heaven."

These words made such a vivid impression upon Castanier that he instantly hurried from the house to the Church of Saint-Sulpice, obeying what might be called a decree of fate. Melmoth's repentance had stupefied him.

At that time, on certain mornings in the week, a preacher, famed for his eloquence, was wont to hold conferences, in the course of which he demonstrated the truths of the Catholic faith for the youth of a generation proclaimed to be indifferent in matters of belief by another voice no less eloquent than his own. The conference had been put off to a later hour on account of Melmoth's funeral, so Castanier arrived just as the great preacher was epitomizing the proofs of a future existence of happiness with all the charm of eloquence and force of expression which have made him famous. The seeds of divine doctrine fell into a soil prepared for them in the old dragoon, into whom the Devil had glided. Indeed, if there is a phenomenon well attested by experience, is it not the spiritual phenomenon commonly called "the faith of the peasant"? The strength of belief varies inversely with the amount of use that a man has made of his reasoning faculties. Simple people and soldiers belong to the unreasoning class. Those who have marched through life beneath the banner of instinct are far more ready to receive the light than minds and hearts overwearied with the world's sophistries.

Castanier had the southern temperament; he had joined the army as a lad of sixteen, and had followed the French flag till he was nearly forty years old. As a common trooper, he had fought day and night, and day after day, and, as in duty bound, had thought of his horse first, and of himself afterwards. While he served his military apprenticeship, therefore, he had but little leisure in which to reflect on the destiny of man, and when he became an officer he had his men to think of. He had been swept from battlefield to battlefield, but he had never thought of

what comes after death. A soldier's life does not demand much thinking. Those who cannot understand the lofty political ends involved and the interests of nation and nation; who cannot grasp political schemes as well as plans of campaign and combine the science of the tactician with that of the administrator, are bound to live in a state of ignorance; the most boorish peasant in the most backward district in France is scarcely in a worse case. Such men as these bear the brunt of war, yield passive obedience to the brain that directs them, and strike down the men opposed to them as the woodcutter fells timber in the forest. Violent physical exertion is succeeded by times of inertia, when they repair the waste. They fight and drink, fight and eat, fight and sleep, that they may the better deal hard blows; the powers of the mind are not greatly exercised in this turbulent round of existence, and the character is as simple as heretofore.

When the men who have shown such energy on the battlefield return to ordinary civilization, most of those who have not risen to high rank seem to have acquired no ideas, and to have no aptitude, no capacity, for grasping new ideas. To the utter amazement of a younger generation, those who made our armies so glorious and so terrible are as simple as children, and as slow-witted as a clerk at his worst, and the captain of a thundering squadron is scarcely fit to keep a merchant's day-book. Old soldiers of this stamp, therefore, being innocent of any attempt to use their reasoning faculties, act upon their strongest impulses. Castanier's crime was one of those matters that raise so many questions, that, in order to debate about it, a moralist might call for its "discussion by clauses," to make use of a parliamentary expression.

Passion had counseled the crime; the cruelly irresistible power of feminine witchery had driven him to commit it; no man can say of himself, "I will never do that," when a siren joins in the combat and throws her spells over him.

So the word of life fell upon a conscience newly awakened to the truths of religion which the French Revolution

and a soldier's career had forced Castanier to neglect. The solemn words, "You will be happy or miserable for all eternity!" made but the more terrible impression upon him, because he had exhausted earth and shaken it like a barren tree; because his desires could effect all things, so that it was enough that any spot in earth or heaven should be forbidden him, and he forthwith thought of nothing else. If it were allowable to compare such great things with social follies, Castanier's position was not unlike that of a banker who, finding that his all-powerful millions cannot obtain for him an entrance into the society of the noblesse, must set his heart upon entering that circle, and all the social privileges that he has already acquired are as nothing in his eyes from the moment when he discovers that a single one is lacking.

Here was a man more powerful than all the kings on earth put together; a man who, like Satan, could wrestle with God Himself; leaning against one of the pillars in the Church of Saint-Sulpice, weighed down by the feelings and thoughts that oppressed him, and absorbed in the thought of a Future, the same thought that had engulfed Melmoth.

"He was very happy, was Melmoth!" cried Castanier. "He died in the certain knowledge that he would go to heaven."

In a moment the greatest possible change had been wrought in the cashier's ideas. For several days he had been a devil, now he was nothing but a man; an image of the fallen Adam, of the sacred tradition embodied in all cosmogonies. But while he had thus shrunk to manhood, he retained a germ of greatness, he had been steeped in the Infinite. The power of hell had revealed the divine power. He thirsted for heaven as he had never thirsted after the pleasures of earth, that are so soon exhausted. The enjoyments which the fiend promises are but the enjoyments of earth on a larger scale, but to the joys of heaven there is no limit. He believed in God, and the spell that gave him the treasures of the world was as nothing to him now; the treasures themselves seemed to him as contemptible as peb-

bles to an admirer of diamonds; they were but gewgaws compared with the eternal glories of the other life. A curse lay, he thought, on all things that came to him from this source. He sounded dark depths of painful thought as he listened to the service performed for Melmoth. The *Dies iræ* filled him with awe; he felt all the grandeur of that cry of a repentant soul trembling before the Throne of God. The Holy Spirit, like a devouring flame, passed through him as fire consumes straw.

The tears were falling from his eyes when—"Are you a relation of the dead?" the beadle asked him.

"I am his heir," Castanier answered.

"Give something for the expenses of the services!" cried the man.

"No," said the cashier. (The Devil's money should not go to the Church.)

"For the poor!"

"No."

"For repairing the Church!"

"No."

"The Lady Chapel!"

"No."

"For the schools!"

"No."

Castanier went, not caring to expose himself to the sour looks that the irritated functionaries gave him.

Outside, in the street, he looked up at the Church of Saint-Sulpice. "What made people build the giant cathedrals I have seen in every country?" he asked himself. "The feeling shared so widely throughout all time must surely be based upon something."

"Something! Do you call God *something*?" cried his conscience. "God! God! God! . . ."

The word was echoed and reëchoed by an inner voice, till it overwhelmed him; but his feeling of terror subsided as he heard sweet distant sounds of music that he had caught faintly before. They were singing in the church, he thought, and his eyes scanned the great doorway. But

as he listened more closely, the sounds poured upon him from all sides; he looked round the square, but there was no sign of any musicians. The melody brought visions of a distant heaven and far-off gleams of hope; but it also quickened the remorse that had set the lost soul in a ferment. He went on his way through Paris, walking as men walk who are crushed beneath the burden of their sorrow, seeing everything with unseeing eyes, loitering like an idler, stopping without cause, muttering to himself, careless of the traffic, making no effort to avoid a blow from a plank of timber.

Imperceptibly repentance brought him under the influence of the divine grace that soothes while it bruises the heart so terribly. His face came to wear a look of Melmoth, something great, with a trace of madness in the greatness. A look of dull and hopeless distress, mingled with the excited eagerness of hope, and, beneath it all, a gnawing sense of loathing for all that the world can give. The humblest of prayers lurked in the eyes that saw with such dreadful clearness. His power was the measure of his anguish. His body was bowed down by the fearful storm that shook his soul, as the tall pines bend before the blast. Like his predecessor, he could not refuse to bear the burden of life; he was afraid to die while he bore the yoke of hell. The torment grew intolerable.

At last, one morning, he bethought himself how that Melmoth (now among the blessed) had made the proposal of an exchange, and how that he had accepted it; others, doubtless, would follow his example; for in an age proclaimed, by the inheritors of the eloquence of the Fathers of the Church, to be fatally indifferent to religion, it should be easy to find a man who would accept the conditions of the contract in order to prove its advantages.

"There is one place where you can learn what kings will fetch in the market; where nations are weighed in the balance and systems appraised; where the value of a government is stated in terms of the five-franc piece; where ideas and beliefs have their price, and everything is discounted;

where God Himself, in a manner, borrows on the security of His revenue of souls, for the Pope has a running account there. Is it not there that I should go to traffic in souls?"

Castanier went quite joyously on 'Change, thinking that it would be as easy to buy a soul as to invest money in the Funds. Any ordinary person would have feared ridicule, but Castanier knew by experience that a desperate man takes everything seriously. A prisoner lying under sentence of death would listen to the madman who should tell him that by pronouncing some gibberish he could escape through the keyhole; for suffering is credulous, and clings to an idea until it fails, as the swimmer borne along by the current clings to the branch that snaps in his hand.

Toward four o'clock that afternoon Castanier appeared among the little knots of men who were transacting private business after 'Change. He was personally known to some of the brokers; and while affecting to be in search of an acquaintance, he managed to pick up the current gossip and rumors of failure.

"Catch me negotiating bills for Claparon & Co., my boy. The bank collector went round to return their acceptances to them this morning," said a fat banker in his outspoken way. "If you have any of their paper, look out."

Claparon was in the building, in deep consultation with a man well known for the ruinous rate at which he lent money. Castanier went forthwith in search of the said Claparon, a merchant who had a reputation for taking heavy risks that meant wealth or utter ruin. The money lender walked away as Castanier came up. A gesture betrayed the speculator's despair.

"Well, Claparon, the bank wants a hundred thousand francs of you, and it is four o'clock; the thing is known, and it is too late to arrange your little failure comfortably," said Castanier.

"Sir!"

"Speak lower," the cashier went on. "How if I were to propose a piece of business that would bring you in as much money as you require?"

"It would not discharge my liabilities; every business that I ever heard of wants a little time to simmer in."

"I know of something that will set you straight in a moment," answered Castanier; "but first you would have to——"

"Do what?"

"Sell your share of Paradise. It is a matter of business like anything else, isn't it? We all hold shares in the great Speculation of Eternity."

"I tell you this," said Claparon angrily, "that I am just the man to lend you a slap in the face. When a man is in trouble, it is no time to play silly jokes on him."

"I am talking seriously," said Castanier, and he drew a bundle of notes from his pocket.

"In the first place," said Claparon, "I am not going to sell my soul to the Devil for a trifle. I want five hundred thousand francs before I strike——"

"Who talks of stinting you?" asked Castanier, cutting him short. "You should have more gold than you could stow in the cellars of the Bank of France."

He held out a handful of notes. That decided Claparon.

"Done," he cried; "but how is the bargain to be made?"

"Let us go over yonder, no one is standing there," said Castanier, pointing to a corner of the court.

Claparon and his tempter exchanged a few words, with their faces turned to the wall. None of the onlookers guessed the nature of this by-play, though their curiosity was keenly excited by the strange gestures of the two contracting parties. When Castanier returned, there was a sudden outburst of amazed exclamation. As in the Assembly where the least event immediately attracts attention, all faces were turned to the two men who had caused the sensation, and a shiver passed through all beholders at the change that had taken place in them.

The men who form the moving crowd that fills the Stock Exchange are soon known to each other by sight. They watch each other like players round a card table. Some shrewd observers can tell how a man will play and the con-

dition of his exchequer from a survey of his face; and the Stock Exchange is simply a vast card table. Everyone, therefore, had noticed Claparon and Castanier. The latter (like the Irishman before him [1]) had been muscular and powerful, his eyes were full of light, his color high. The dignity and power in his face had struck awe into them all; they wondered how old Castanier had come by it; and now they beheld Castanier divested of his power, shrunken, wrinkled, aged, and feeble. He had drawn Claparon out of the crowd with the energy of a sick man in a fever fit; he had looked like an opium eater during the brief period of excitement that the drug can give; now, on his return, he seemed to be in the condition of utter exhaustion in which the patient dies after the fever departs, or to be suffering from the horrible prostration that follows on excessive indulgence in the delights of narcotics. The infernal power that had upheld him through his debauches had left him, and the body was left unaided and alone to endure the agony of remorse and the heavy burden of sincere repentance. Claparon's troubles everyone could guess; but Claparon reappeared, on the other hand, with sparkling eyes, holding his head high with the pride of Lucifer. The crisis had passed from the one man to the other.

"Now you can drop off with an easy mind, old man," said Claparon to Castanier.

"For pity's sake, send for a cab and for a priest; send for the curate of Saint-Sulpice!" answered the old dragoon, sinking down upon the curbstone.

The words "a priest" reached the ears of several people, and produced uproarious jeering among the stockbrokers, for faith with these gentlemen means a belief that a scrap of paper called a mortgage represents an estate, and the List of Fundholders is their Bible.

"Shall I have time to repent?" said Castanier to himself, in a piteous voice, that impressed Claparon.

A cab carried away the dying man; the speculator went

[1] Referring to John Melmoth—see note at head of this story. —EDITOR.

to the bank at once to meet his bills; and the momentary sensation produced upon the throng of business men by the sudden change on the two faces, vanished like the furrow cut by a ship's keel in the sea. News of the greatest importance kept the attention of the world of commerce on the alert; and when commercial interests are at stake, Moses might appear with his two luminous horns, and his coming would scarcely receive the honors of a pun; the gentlemen whose business it is to write the Market Reports would ignore his existence.

When Claparon had made his payments, fear seized upon him. There was no mistake about his power. He went on 'Change again, and offered his bargain to other men in embarrassed circumstances. The Devil's bond, "together with the rights, easements, and privileges appertaining thereunto,"—to use the expression of the notary who succeeded Claparon, changed hands for the sum of seven hundred thousand francs. The notary in his turn parted with the agreement with the Devil for five hundred thousand francs to a building contractor in difficulties, who likewise was rid of it to an iron merchant in consideration of a hundred thousand crowns. In fact, by five o'clock people had ceased to believe in the strange contract, and purchasers were lacking for want of confidence.

At half-past five the holder of the bond was a house painter, who was lounging by the door of the building in the Rue Feydeau, where at that time stockbrokers temporarily congregated. The house painter, simple fellow, could not think what was the matter with him. He "felt all anyhow"; so he told his wife when he went home.

The Rue Feydeau, as idlers about town are aware, is a place of pilgrimage for youths who for lack of a mistress bestow their ardent affection upon the whole sex. On the first floor of the most rigidly respectable domicile therein dwelt one of those exquisite creatures whom it has pleased heaven to endow with the rarest and most surpassing beauty. As it is impossible that they should all be duchesses

or queens (since there are many more pretty women in the world than titles and thrones for them to adorn), they are content to make a stockbroker or a banker happy at a fixed price. To this good-natured beauty, Euphrasia by name, an unbounded ambition had led a notary's clerk to aspire. In short, the second clerk in the office of Maître Crottat, notary, had fallen in love with her, as youth at two and twenty can fall in love. The scrivener would have murdered the Pope and run amuck through the whole sacred college to procure the miserable sum of a hundred louis to pay for a shawl which had turned Euphrasia's head, at which price her waiting woman had promised that Euphrasia should be his. The infatuated youth walked to and fro under Madame Euphrasia's windows, like the polar bears in their cage at the Jardin des Plantes, with his right hand thrust beneath his waistcoat in the region of the heart, which he was fit to tear from his bosom, but as yet he had only wrenched at the elastic of his braces.

"What can one do to raise ten thousand francs?" he asked himself. "Shall I make off with the money that I must pay on the registration of that conveyance? Good heavens! my loan would not ruin the purchaser, a man with seven millions! And then next day I would fling myself at his feet and say, 'I have taken ten thousand francs belonging to you, sir; I am twenty-two years of age, and I am in love with Euphrasia—that is my story. My father is rich, he will pay you back; do not ruin me! Have not you yourself been twenty-two years old and madly in love?' But these beggarly landowners have no souls! He would be quite likely to give me up to the public prosecutor, instead of taking pity upon me. Good God! if it were only possible to sell your soul to the Devil! But there is neither a God nor a Devil; it is all nonsense out of nursery tales and old wives' talk. What shall I do?"

"If you have a mind to sell your soul to the Devil, sir," said the house painter, who had overheard something that the clerk let fall, "you can have the ten thousand francs."

"And Euphrasia!" cried the clerk, as he struck a bargain with the devil that inhabited the house painter.

The pact concluded, the frantic clerk went to find the shawl, and mounted Madame Euphrasia's staircase; and as (literally) the devil was in him, he did not come down for twelve days, drowning the thought of hell and of his privileges in twelve days of love and riot and forgetfulness, for which he had bartered away all his hopes of a paradise to come.

And in this way the secret of the vast power discovered and acquired by the Irishman, the offspring of Maturin's brain, was lost to mankind; and the various Orientalists, Mystics, and Archæologists who take an interest in these matters were unable to hand down to posterity the proper method of invoking the Devil, for the following sufficient reasons:—

On the thirteenth day after these frenzied nuptials the wretched clerk lay on a pallet bed in a garret in his master's house in the Rue Saint-Honoré. Shame, the stupid goddess who dares not behold herself, had taken possession of the young man. He had fallen ill; he would nurse himself; misjudged the quantity of a remedy devised by the skill of a practitioner well known on the walls of Paris, and succumbed to the effects of an overdose of mercury. His corpse was as black as a mole's back. A devil had left unmistakable traces of its passage there; could it have been Ashtaroth?

"The estimable youth to whom you refer has been carried away to the planet Mercury," said the head clerk to a German demonologist who came to investigate the matter at first hand.

"I am quite prepared to believe it," answered the Teuton.

"Oh!"

"Yes, sir," returned the other. "The opinion you advance coincides with the very words of Jacob Boehme. In the forty-eighth proposition of *The Threefold Life of Man* he says that 'if God hath brought all things to pass with

a LET THERE BE, the FIAT is the secret matrix which comprehends and apprehends the nature which is formed by the spirit born of Mercury and of God.' "

"What do you say, sir?"

The German delivered his quotation afresh.

"We do not know it," said the clerks.

"*Fiat?* . . ." said a clerk. "*Fiat lux!*"

"You can verify the citation for yourselves," said the German. "You will find the passage in the *Treatise of the Threefold Life of Man,* page 75; the edition was published by M. Migneret in 1809. It was translated into French by a philosopher who had a great admiration for the famous shoemaker."

"Oh! he was a shoemaker, was he?" said the head clerk.

"In Prussia," said the German.

"Did he work for the King of Prussia?" inquired a Bœotian of a second clerk.

"He must have vamped up his prose," said a third.

"That man is colossal!" cried the fourth, pointing to the Teuton.

That gentleman, though a demonologist of the first rank, did not know the amount of devilry to be found in a notary's clerk. He went away without the least idea that they were making game of him, and fully under the impression that the young fellows regarded Boehme as a colossal genius.

"Education is making strides in France," said he to himself.

The Conscript

[The inner self] . . . by a phenomenon of vision or of locomotion has been known at times to abolish Space in its two modes of Time and Distance—the one intellectual, the other physical.

—HISTORY OF LOUIS LAMBERT.

ON a November evening in the year 1793 the principal citizens of Carentan were assembled in Mme. de Dey's drawing-room. Mme. de Dey held this *reception* every

night of the week, but an unwonted interest attached to this evening's gathering, owing to certain circumstances which would have passed altogether unnoticed in a great city, though in a small country town they excited the greatest curiosity. For two days before Mme. de Dey had not been at home to her visitors, and on the previous evening her door had been shut, on the ground of indisposition. Two such events at any ordinary time would have produced in Carentan the same sensation that Paris knows on nights when there is no performance at the theaters—existence is in some sort incomplete; but in those times when the least indiscretion on the part of an aristocrat might be a matter of life and death, this conduct of Mme. de Dey's was likely to bring about the most disastrous consequences for her. Her position in Carentan ought to be made clear, if the reader is to appreciate the expression of keen curiosity and cunning fanaticism on the countenances of these Norman citizens, and, what is of most importance, the part that the lady played among them. Many a one during the days of the Revolution has doubtless passed through a crisis as difficult as hers at that moment, and the sympathies of more than one reader will fill in all the coloring of the picture.

Mme. de Dey was the widow of a Lieutenant-General, a Knight of the Orders of Saint Michael and of the Holy Ghost. She had left the Court when the Emigration began, and taken refuge in the neighborhood of Carentan, where she had large estates, hoping that the influence of the Reign of Terror would be but little felt there. Her calculations, based on a thorough knowledge of the district, proved correct. The Revolution made little disturbance in Lower Normandy. Formerly, when Mme. de Dey had spent any time in the country, her circle of acquaintance had been confined to the noble families of the district; but now, from politic motives, she opened her house to the principal citizens and to the Revolutionary authorities of the town, endeavoring to touch and gratify their social pride without arousing either hatred or jealousy. Gracious and kindly,

possessed of the indescribable charm that wins good will without loss of dignity or effort to pay court to any, she had succeeded in gaining universal esteem; the discreet warnings of exquisite tact enabled her to steer a difficult course among the exacting claims of this mixed society, without wounding the overweening self-love of parvenus on the one hand, or the susceptibilities of her old friends on the other.

She was about thirty-eight years of age, and still preserved, not the fresh, high-colored beauty of the Basse-Normandes, but a fragile loveliness of what may be called an aristocratic type. Her figure was lissome and slender, her features delicate and clearly cut; the pale face seemed to light up and live when she spoke; but there was a quiet and devout look in the great dark eyes, for all their graciousness of expression—a look that seemed to say that the springs of her life lay without her own existence.

In her early girlhood she had been married to an elderly and jealous soldier. Her false position in the midst of a gay Court had doubtless done something to bring a veil of sadness over a face that must once have been bright with the charms of quick-pulsed life and love. She had been compelled to set constant restraint upon her frank impulses and emotions at an age when a woman feels rather than thinks, and the depths of passion in her heart had never been stirred. In this lay the secret of her greatest charm, a youthfulness of the inmost soul, betrayed at times by her face, and a certain tinge of innocent wistfulness in her ideas. She was reserved in her demeanor, but in her bearing and in the tones of her voice there was still something that told of girlish longings directed toward a vague future. Before very long the least susceptible fell in love with her, and yet stood somewhat in awe of her dignity and high-bred manner. Her great soul, strengthened by the cruel ordeals through which she had passed, seemed to set her too far above the ordinary level, and these men weighed themselves, and instinctively felt that they were found wanting. Such a nature demanded an exalted passion.

Moreover, Mme. de Dey's affections were concentrated in one sentiment—a mother's love for her son. All the happiness and joy that she had not known as a wife, she had found later in her boundless love for him. The coquetry of a mistress, the jealousy of a wife mingled with the pure and deep affection of a mother. She was miserable when they were apart, and nervous about him while he was away; she could never see enough of him, and lived through and for him alone. Some idea of the strength of this tie may be conveyed to the masculine understanding by adding that this was not only Mme. de Dey's only son, but all she had of kith or kin in the world, the one human being on earth bound to her by all the fears and hopes and joys of her life.

The late Comte de Dey was the last of his race, and she, his wife, was the sole heiress and descendant of her house. So worldly ambitions and family considerations, as well as the noblest cravings of the soul, combined to heighten in the Countess a sentiment that is strong in every woman's heart. The child was all the dearer, because only with infinite care had she succeeded in rearing him to man's estate; medical science had predicted his death a score of times, but she had held fast to her presentiments and her hopes, and had known the inexpressible joy of watching him pass safely through the perils of infancy, of seeing his constitution strengthen in spite of the decrees of the Faculty.

Thanks to her constant care, the boy had grown up and developed so favorably, that at twenty years of age he was regarded as one of the most accomplished gentlemen at the Court of Versailles. One final happiness that does not always crown a mother's efforts was hers—her son worshiped her; and between these two there was the deep sympathy of kindred souls. If they had not been bound to each other already by a natural and sacred tie, they would instinctively have felt for each other a friendship that is rarely met with between two men.

At the age of eighteen, the young Count had received an appointment as sub-lieutenant in a regiment of dragoons,

and had made it a point of honor to follow the emigrant Princes into exile.

Then Mme. de Dey faced the dangers of her cruel position. She was rich, noble, and the mother of an Emigrant. With the one desire to look after her son's great fortune, she had denied herself the happiness of being with him; and when she read the rigorous laws in virtue of which the Republic was daily confiscating the property of Emigrants at Carentan, she congratulated herself on the courageous course that she had taken. Was she not keeping watch over the wealth of her son at the risk of her life? Later, when news came of the horrible executions ordered by the Convention, she slept, happy in the knowledge that her own treasure was in safety, out of reach of peril, far from the scaffolds of the Revolution. She loved to think that she had followed the best course, that she had saved her darling and her darling's fortunes; and to this secret thought she made such concessions as the misfortunes of the times demanded, without compromising her dignity or her aristocratic tenets, and enveloped her sorrows in reserve and mystery. She had foreseen the difficulties that would beset her at Carentan. Did she not tempt the scaffold by the very fact of going thither to take a prominent place? Yet, sustained by a mother's courage, she succeeded in winning the affection of the poor, ministering without distinction to everyone in trouble; and made herself necessary to the well-to-do, by providing amusements for them.

The procureur of the commune might be seen at her house, the mayor, the president of the "district," and the public prosecutor, and even the judges of the Revolutionary tribunals went there. The four first-named gentlemen were none of them married, and each paid court to her, in the hope that Mme. de Dey would take him for her husband, either from fear of making an enemy or from a desire to find a protector.

The public prosecutor, once an attorney at Caen, and the Countess's man of business, did what he could to inspire love by a system of devotion and generosity, a dangerous

game of cunning! He was the most formidable of all her suitors. He alone knew the amount of the large fortune of his sometime client, and his fervor was inevitably increased by the cupidity of greed, and by the consciousness that he wielded an enormous power, the power of life and death in the district. He was still a young man, and, owing to the generosity of his behavior, Mme. de Dey was unable as yet to estimate him truly. But, in despite of the danger of matching herself against Norman cunning, she used all the craft and inventiveness that Nature has bestowed on women to play off the rival suitors one against another. She hoped, by gaining time, to emerge safe and sound from her difficulties at last; for at that time Royalists in the provinces flattered themselves with a hope, daily renewed, that the morrow would see the end of the Revolution—a conviction that proved fatal to many of them.

In spite of difficulties, the Countess had maintained her independence with considerable skill until the day when, by an inexplicable want of prudence, she took occasion to close her salon. So deep and sincere was the interest that she inspired, that those who usually filled her drawing-room felt a lively anxiety when the news was spread; then, with the frank curiosity characteristic of provincial manners, they went to inquire into the misfortune, grief, or illness that had befallen Mme. de Dey.

To all these questions, Brigitte, the housekeeper, answered with the same formula: her mistress was keeping her room, and would see no one, not even her own servants. The almost claustral lives of dwellers in small towns fosters a habit of analysis and conjectural explanation of the business of everybody else; so strong is it, that when everyone had exclaimed over poor Mme. de Dey (without knowing whether the lady was overcome by joy or sorrow), each one began to inquire into the causes of her sudden seclusion.

"If she were ill, she would have sent for the doctor," said gossip number one; "now the doctor has been playing chess in my house all day. He said to me, laughing,

that in these days there is only one disease, and that, unluckily, it is incurable."

The joke was hazarded discreetly. Women and men, elderly folk and young girls, forthwith betook themselves to the vast fields of conjecture. Everyone imagined that there was some secret in it, and every head was busy with the secret. Next day the suspicions became malignant. Everyone lives in public in a small town, and the womenkind were the first to find out that Brigitte had laid in an extra stock of provisions. The thing could not be disputed. Brigitte had been seen in the market-place betimes that morning, and, wonderful to relate, she had bought the one hare to be had. The whole town knew that Mme. de Dey did not care for game. The hare became a starting point for endless conjectures.

Elderly gentlemen, taking their constitutional, noticed a sort of suppressed bustle in the Countess's house; the symptoms were the more apparent because the servants were at evident pains to conceal them. The man-servant was beating a carpet in the garden. Only yesterday no one would have remarked the fact, but to-day everybody began to build romances upon that harmless piece of household stuff. Everyone had a version.

On the following day, that on which Mme. de Dey gave out that she was not well, the magnates of Carentan went to spend the evening at the mayor's brother's house. He was a retired merchant, a married man, a strictly honorable soul; everyone respected him, and the Countess held him in high regard. There all the rich widows' suitors were fain to invent more or less probable fictions, each one thinking the while how to turn to his own advantage the secret that compelled her to compromise herself in such a manner.

The public prosecutor spun out a whole drama to bring Mme. de Dey's son to her house of a night. The mayor had a belief in a priest who had refused the oath, a refugee from La Vendée; but this left him not a little embarrassed how to account for the purchase of a hare on a Friday.

The president of the district had strong leanings toward a Chouan chief, or a Vendean leader hotly pursued. Others voted for a noble escaped from the prisons of Paris. In short, one and all suspected that the Countess had been guilty of some piece of generosity that the law of those days defined as a crime, an offense that was like to bring her to the scaffold. The public prosecutor, moreover, said, in a low voice, that they must hush the matter up, and try to save the unfortunate lady from the abyss toward which she was hastening.

"If you spread reports about," he added, "I shall be obliged to take cognizance of the matter, and to search the house, and then! . . ."

He said no more, but everyone understood what was left unsaid.

The Countess's real friends were so much alarmed for her, that on the morning of the third day the *Procureur Syndic* of the commune made his wife write a few lines to persuade Mme. de Dey to hold her reception as usual that evening. The old merchant took a bolder step. He called that morning upon the lady. Strong in the thought of the service he meant to do her, he insisted that he must see Mme. de Dey, and was amazed beyond expression to find her out in the garden, busy gathering the last autumn flowers in her borders to fill the vases.

"She has given refuge to her lover, no doubt," thought the old man, struck with pity for the charming woman before him.

The Countess's face wore a strange look, that confirmed his suspicions. Deeply moved by the devotion so natural to women, but that always touches us, because all men are flattered by the sacrifices that any woman makes for any one of them, the merchant told the Countess of the gossip that was circulating in the town, and showed her the danger that she was running. He wound up at last with saying that "if there are some of our public functionaries who are sufficiently ready to pardon a piece of heroism on your part so long as it is a priest that you wish to save, no one

will show you any mercy if it is discovered that you are sacrificing yourself to the dictates of your heart."

At these words Mme. de Dey gazed at her visitor with a wild excitement in her manner that made him tremble, old though he was.

"Come in," she said, taking him by the hand to bring him to her room, and as soon as she had assured herself that they were alone, she drew a soiled, torn letter from her bodice.—"Read it!" she cried, with a violent effort to pronounce the words.

She dropped as if exhausted into her armchair. While the old merchant looked for his spectacles and wiped them, she raised her eyes, and for the first time looked at him with curiosity; then, in an uncertain voice, "I trust in you," she said softly.

"Why did I come but to share in your crime?" the old merchant said simply.

She trembled. For the first time since she had come to the little town her soul found sympathy in another soul. A sudden light dawned meantime on the old merchant; he understood the Countess's joy and her prostration.

Her son had taken part in the Granville expedition; he wrote to his mother from his prison, and the letter brought her a sad, sweet hope. Feeling no doubts as to his means of escape, he wrote that within three days he was sure to reach her, disguised. The same letter that brought these weighty tidings was full of heartrending farewells in case the writer should not be in Carentan by the evening of the third day, and he implored his mother to send a considerable sum of money by the bearer, who had gone through dangers innumerable to deliver it. The paper shook in the old man's hands.

"And to-day is the third day!" cried Mme. de Dey. She sprang to her feet, took back the letter, and walked up and down.

"You have set to work imprudently," the merchant remarked, addressing her. "Why did you buy provisions?"

"Why, he may come in dying of hunger, worn out with fatigue, and—" She broke off.

"I am sure of my brother," the old merchant went on; "I will engage him in your interests."

The merchant in this crisis recovered his old business shrewdness, and the advice that he gave Mme. de Dey was full of prudence and wisdom. After the two had agreed together as to what they were to do and say, the old merchant went on various ingenious pretexts to pay visits to the principal houses of Carentan, announcing wherever he went that he had just been to see Mme. de Dey, and that, in spite of her indisposition, she would receive that evening. Matching his shrewdness against Norman wits in the cross-examination he underwent in every family as to the Countess's complaint, he succeeded in putting almost everyone who took an interest in the mysterious affair upon the wrong scent.

His very first call worked wonders. He told, in the hearing of a gouty old lady, how that Mme. de Dey had all but died of an attack of gout in the stomach; how that the illustrious Tronchin had recommended her in such a case to put the skin from a live hare on her chest, to stop in bed, and keep perfectly still. The Countess, he said, had lain in danger of her life for the past two days; but after carefully following out Tronchin's singular prescription, she was now sufficiently recovered to receive visitors that evening.

This tale had an immense success in Carentan. The local doctor, a Royalist *in petto*, added to its effect by gravely discussing the specific. Suspicion, nevertheless, had taken too deep root in a few perverse or philosophical minds to be entirely dissipated; so it fell out that those who had the right of entry into Mme. de Dey's drawing-room hurried thither at an early hour, some to watch her face, some out of friendship, but the more part attracted by the fame of the marvelous cure.

They found the Countess seated in a corner of the great chimney-piece in her room, which was almost as modestly

furnished as similar apartments in Carentan; for she had given up the enjoyment of luxuries to which she had formerly been accustomed, for fear of offending the narrow prejudices of her guests, and she had made no changes in her house. The floor was not even polished. She had left the old somber hangings on the walls, had kept the old-fashioned country furniture, burned tallow candles, had fallen in with the ways of the place and adopted provincial life without flinching before its cast-iron narrowness, its most disagreeable hardships; but knowing that her guests would forgive her for any prodigality that conduced to their comfort, she left nothing undone where their personal enjoyment was concerned; her dinners, for instance, were excellent. She even went so far as to affect avarice to recommend herself to these sordid natures; and had the ingenuity to make it appear that certain concessions to luxury had been made at the instance of others, to whom she had graciously yielded.

Toward seven o'clock that evening, therefore, the nearest approach to polite society that Carentan could boast was assembled in Mme. de Dey's drawing-room, in a wide circle, about the fire. The old merchant's sympathetic glances sustained the mistress of the house through this ordeal; with wonderful strength of mind, she underwent the curious scrutiny of her guests, and bore with their trivial prosings. Every time there was a knock at the door, at every sound of footsteps in the street, she hid her agitation by raising questions of absorbing interest to the countryside. She led the conversation on to the burning topic of the quality of various ciders, and was so well seconded by her friend who shared her secret, that her guests almost forgot to watch her, and her face wore its wonted look; her self-possession was unshaken. The public prosecutor and one of the judges of the Revolutionary Tribunal kept silence, however; noting the slightest change that flickered over her features, listening through the noisy talk to every sound in the house. Several times they put awkward questions, which the Countess answered

with wonderful presence of mind. So brave is a mother's heart!

Mme. de Dey had drawn her visitors into little groups, had made parties of whist, boston, or reversis, and sat talking with some of the young people; she seemed to be living completely in the present moment, and played her part like a consummate actress. She elicited a suggestion of loto, and saying that no one else knew where to find the game, she left the room.

"My good Brigitte, I cannot breathe down there!" she cried, brushing away the tears that sprang to her eyes that glittered with fever, sorrow, and impatience.—She had gone up to her son's room, and was looking round it. "He does not come," she said. "Here I can breathe and live. A few minutes more, and he will be here, for he is alive, I am sure that he is alive! my heart tells me so. Do you hear nothing, Brigitte? Oh! I would give the rest of my life to know whether he is still in prison or tramping across the country. I would rather not think."

Once more she looked to see that everything was in order. A bright fire blazed on the hearth, the shutters were carefully closed, the furniture shone with cleanliness, the bed had been made after a fashion that showed that Brigitte and the Countess had given their minds to every trifling detail. It was impossible not to read her hopes in the dainty and thoughtful preparations about the room; love and a mother's tenderest caresses seemed to pervade the air in the scent of flowers. None but a mother could have foreseen the requirements of a soldier and arranged so completely for their satisfaction. A dainty meal, the best of wine, clean linen, slippers—no necessary, no comfort, was lacking for the weary traveler, and all the delights of home heaped upon him should reveal his mother's love.

"Oh, Brigitte! . . ." cried the Countess, with a heart-rending inflection in her voice. She drew a chair to the table as if to strengthen her illusions and realize her longings.

"Ah! madame, he is coming. He is not far off. . . . I

haven't a doubt that he is living and on his way," Brigitte answered. "I put a key in the Bible and held it on my fingers while Cottin read the Gospel of St. John, and the key did not turn, madame."

"Is that a certain sign?" the Countess asked.

"Why, yes, madame! everybody knows that. He is still alive; I would stake my salvation on it; God cannot be mistaken."

"If only I could see him here in the house, in spite of the danger."

"Poor Monsieur Auguste!" cried Brigitte; "I expect he is tramping along the lanes!"

"And that is eight o'clock striking now!" cried the Countess in terror.

She was afraid that she had been too long in the room where she felt sure that her son was alive; all those preparations made for him meant that he was alive. She went down, but she lingered a moment in the peristyle for any sound that might waken the sleeping echoes of the town. She smiled at Brigitte's husband, who was standing there on guard; the man's eyes looked stupid with the strain of listening to the faint sounds of the night. She stared into the darkness, seeing her son in every shadow everywhere; but it was only for a moment. Then she went back to the drawing-room with an assumption of high spirits, and began to play at loto with the little girls. But from time to time she complained of feeling unwell, and went to sit in her great chair by the fireside. So things went in Mme. de Dey's house and in the minds of those beneath her roof.

Meanwhile, on the road from Paris to Cherbourg, a young man, dressed in the inevitable brown *carmagnole* of those days, was plodding his way toward Carentan. When the first levies were made, there was little or no discipline kept up. The exigencies of the moment scarcely admitted of soldiers being equipped at once, and it was no uncommon thing to see the roads thronged with conscripts in their ordinary clothes. The young fellows went ahead of their company to the next halting place, or lagged behind it; it

depended upon their fitness to bear the fatigues of a long march. This particular wayfarer was some considerable way in advance of a company of conscripts on the way to Cherbourg, whom the mayor was expecting to arrive every hour, for it was his duty to distribute their billets. The young man's footsteps were still firm as he trudged along, and his bearing seemed to indicate that he was no stranger to the rough life of a soldier. The moon shone on the pasture land about Carentan, but he had noticed great masses of white cloud that were about to scatter showers of snow over the country, and doubtless the fear of being overtaken by a storm had quickened his pace in spite of his weariness.

The wallet on his back was almost empty, and he carried a stick in his hand, cut from one of the high, thick box hedges that surround most of the farms in Lower Normandy. As the solitary wayfarer came into Carentan, the gleaming moonlit outlines of its towers stood out for a moment with ghostly effect against the sky. He met no one in the silent streets that rang with the echoes of his own footsteps, and was obliged to ask the way to the mayor's house of a weaver who was working late. The magistrate was not far to seek, and in a few minutes the conscript was sitting on a stone bench in the mayor's porch waiting for his billet. He was sent for, however, and confronted with that functionary, who scrutinized him closely. The foot soldier was a good-looking young man, whc appeared to be of gentle birth. There was something aristocratic in his bearing, and signs in his face of intelligence developed by a good education.

"What is your name?" asked the mayor, eying him shrewdly.

"Julien Jussieu," answered the conscript.

"From——?" queried the official, and an incredulous smile stole over his features.

"From Paris."

"Your comrades must be a good way behind?" remarked the Norman in sarcastic tones.

"I am three leagues ahead of the battalion."

"Some sentiment attracts you to Carentan, of course, citizen-conscript," said the mayor astutely. "All right, all right!" he added, with a wave of the hand, seeing that the young man was about to speak. "We know where to send you. There, off with you, *Citizen Jussieu*," and he handed over the billet.

There was a tinge of irony in the stress the magistrate laid on the two last words while he held out a billet on Mme. de Dey. The conscript read the direction curiously.

"He knows quite well that he has not far to go, and when he gets outside he will very soon cross the market-place," said the mayor to himself, as the other went out. "He is uncommonly bold! God guide him! . . . He has an answer ready for everything. Yes, but if somebody else had asked to see his papers it would have been all up with him!"

The clocks in Carentan struck half-past nine as he spoke. Lanterns were being lit in Mme. de Dey's antechamber, servants were helping their masters and mistresses into sabots, greatcoats, and calashes. The card players settled their accounts, and everybody went out together, after the fashion of all little country towns.

"It looks as if the prosecutor meant to stop," said a lady, who noticed that that important personage was not in the group in the market-place, where they all took leave of one another before going their separate ways home. And, as a matter of fact, that redoubtable functionary was alone with the Countess, who waited trembling till he should go. There was something appalling in their long silence.

"Citoyenne," said he at last, "I am here to see that the laws of the Republic are carried out——"

Mme. de Dey shuddered.

"Have you nothing to tell me?"

"Nothing!" she answered, in amazement.

"Ah! madame," cried the prosecutor, sitting down beside her and changing his tone. "At this moment, for lack

of a word, one of us—you or I—may carry our heads to the scaffold. I have watched your character, your soul, your manner, too closely to share the error into which you have managed to lead your visitors to-night. You are expecting your son, I could not doubt it."

The Countess made an involuntary sign of denial, but her face had grown white and drawn with the struggle to maintain the composure that she did not feel, and no tremor was lost on the merciless prosecutor.

"Very well," the Revolutionary official went on, "receive him; but do not let him stay under your roof after seven o'clock to-morrow morning; for to-morrow, as soon as it is light, I shall come with a denunciation that I will have made out, and——"

She looked at him, and the dull misery in her eyes would have softened a tiger.

"I will make it clear that the denunciation was false by making a thorough search," he went on in a gentle voice; "my report shall be such that you will be safe from any subsequent suspicion. I shall make mention of your patriotic gifts, your civism, and *all* of us will be safe."

Mme. de Dey, fearful of a trap, sat motionless, her face afire, her tongue frozen. A knock at the door rang through the house.

"Oh! . . ." cried the terrified mother, falling upon her knees; "save him! save him!"

"Yes, let us save him!" returned the public prosecutor, and his eyes grew bright as he looked at her, "if it costs *us* our lives!"

"Lost!" she wailed. The prosecutor raised her politely.

"Madame," said he with a flourish of eloquence, "to your own free will alone would I owe——"

"Madame, he is——" cried Brigitte, thinking that her mistress was alone. At the sight of the public prosecutor, the old servant's joy-flushed countenance became haggard and impassive.

"Who is it, Brigitte?" the prosecutor asked kindly, as if he too were in the secret of the household.

"A conscript that the mayor has sent here for a night's lodging," the woman replied, holding out the billet.

"So it is," said the prosecutor, when he had read the slip of paper. "A battalion is coming here to-night."

And he went.

The Countess's need to believe in the faith of her sometime attorney was so great, that she dared not entertain any suspicion of him. She fled upstairs; she felt scarcely strength enough to stand; she opened the door, and sprang, half dead with fear, into her son's arms.

"Oh! my child! my child!" she sobbed, covering him with almost frenzied kisses.

"Madame! . . ." said a stranger's voice.

"Oh! it is not he!" she cried, shrinking away in terror, and she stood face to face with the conscript, gazing at him with haggard eyes.

"*O saint bon Dieu!* how like he is!" cried Brigitte.

There was silence for a moment; even the stranger trembled at the sight of Mme. de Dey's face.

"Ah! monsieur," she said, leaning on the arm of Brigitte's husband, feeling for the first time the full extent of a sorrow that had all but killed her at its first threatening; "ah! monsieur, I cannot stay to see you any longer . . . permit my servants to supply my place, and to see that you have all that you want."

She went down to her own room, Brigitte and the old serving-man half carrying her between them. The housekeeper set her mistress in a chair, and broke out:

"What, madame! is that man to sleep in Monsieur Auguste's bed, and wear Monsieur Auguste's slippers, and eat the pasty that I made for Monsieur Auguste? Why, if they were to guillotine me for it, I——"

"Brigitte!" cried Mme. de Dey.

Brigitte said no more.

"Hold your tongue, chatterbox," said her husband, in a low voice; "do you want to kill madame?"

A sound came from the conscript's room as he drew his chair to the table.

"I shall not stay here," cried Mme. de Dey; "I shall go into the conservatory; I shall hear better there if anyone passes in the night."

She still wavered between the fear that she had lost her son and the hope of seeing him once more. That night was hideously silent. Once, for the Countess, there was an awful interval, when the battalion of conscripts entered the town, and the men went by, one by one, to their lodgings. Every footfall, every sound in the street, raised hopes to be disappointed; but it was not for long, the dreadful quiet succeeded again. Toward morning the Countess was forced to return to her room. Brigitte, ever keeping watch over her mistress's movements, did not see her come out again; and when she went, she found the Countess lying there dead.

"I expect she heard that conscript," cried Brigitte, "walking about Monsieur Auguste's room, whistling that accursed *Marseillaise* of theirs while he dressed, as if he had been in a stable! That must have killed her."

But it was a deeper and a more solemn emotion, and doubtless some dreadful vision, that had caused Mme. de Dey's death; for at the very hour when she died at Carentan, her son was shot in le Morbihan.

This tragical story may be added to all the instances on record of the workings of sympathies uncontrolled by the laws of time and space. These observations, collected with scientific curiosity by a few isolated individuals, will one day serve as documents on which to base the foundations of a new science which hitherto has lacked its man of genius.

Introduction to Zadig the Babylonian

A work (says the author) which performs more than it promises

VOLTAIRE never heard of a "detective story"; and yet he wrote the first in modern literature, so clever as to be a model for all the others that followed.

He describes his hero Zadig thus: "His chief talent consisted in discovering the truth,"—in making swift, yet marvelous deductions, worthy of Sherlock Holmes or any other of the ingenious modern "thinking machines."

But no one would be more surprised than Voltaire to behold the part that Zadig now "performs." The amusing Babylonian, now regarded as the aristocratic ancestor of modern story-detectives, was created as a chief mocker in a satire on eighteenth-century manners, morals, and metaphysics.

Voltaire breathed his dazzling brilliance into "Zadig" as he did into a hundred other characters—for a political purpose. Their veiled and bitter satire was to make Europe think—to sting reason into action—to ridicule out of existence a humbugging System of special privileges. It did, *via* the French Revolution and the resulting upheavals. His prose romances are the most perfect of Voltaire's manifold expressions to this end, which mark him the most powerful literary man of the century.

But the arch-wit of his age outdid his brilliant self in "Zadig." So surpassingly sharp and quick was this finished sleuth that his methods far outlived his satirical mission. His razor-mind was reincarnated a century later as the fascinator of nations—M. Dupin. And from Poe's wizard up to Sherlock Holmes, no one of the thousand "detectives," drawn in a myriad scenes that thrill the world of readers, but owes his outlines, at least, to "Zadig."

"Don't use your reason—act like your friends—respect conventionalities—otherwise the world will absolutely refuse to let you be happy." This sums up the theory of life that Zadig satires. His comical troubles proceed entirely from his use of independent reason as opposed to the customs of his times.

The satire fitted ancient Babylonia—it fitted eighteenth-century France—and perhaps the reader of these volumes can find some points of contact with his own surroundings.

It is still piquant, however, to remember Zadig's original *raison d'être*. He happened to be cast in the part of what we now know as "a detective," merely because Voltaire had been reading stories in the "Arabian Nights" whose heroes get out of scrapes by marvelous deductions from simple signs. (See Vol. VI.)

Voltaire must have grinned at the delicious human interest, the subtle irony to pierce complacent humbugs, that lurked behind these Oriental situations. He made the most of his chance for a quaint parable, applicable to the courts, the church and science of Europe. As the story runs on, midst many and sudden adventures, the Babylonian reads causes from events in guileless fashion, enthusiastic as Sherlock Holmes, and no less efficient—and all the while, behind this innocent mask, Voltaire is insinuating a comparison between the practical results of Zadig's common sense and the futile mental cobwebs spun by the alleged thought of the time.

Especially did "Zadig" caricature orthodox science, and the metaphysicians, whose solemn searches after final causes, after the reality behind the appearance of things, mostly wandered into hopeless tangles, and thus formed a great weapon of political oppression, by postponing the age of reason and independent thought. Zadig "did not employ himself in calculating how many inches of water flow in a second of time under the arches of a bridge, or whether there fell a cube line of rain in the month of the Mouse more than in the month of the Sheep. He never dreamed of making silk of cobwebs, or porcelain of broken bottles; but he chiefly studied the properties of plants and animals; and soon acquired a sagacity that made him *discover a thousand differences where other men see nothing but uniformity.*"

François Marie Arouet de Voltaire

Zadig the Babylonian

THE BLIND OF ONE EYE

THERE lived at Babylon, in the reign of King Moabdar, a young man named Zadig, of a good natural disposition, strengthened and improved by education. Though rich and young, he had learned to moderate his passions; he had nothing stiff or affected in his behavior, he did not pretend to examine every action by the strict rules of reason, but was always ready to make proper allowances for the weakness of mankind.

It was matter of surprise that, notwithstanding his sprightly wit, he never exposed by his raillery those vague, incoherent, and noisy discourses, those rash censures, ignorant decisions, coarse jests, and all that empty jingle of words which at Babylon went by the name of conversation. He had learned, in the first book of Zoroaster, that self love is a football swelled with wind, from which, when pierced, the most terrible tempests issue forth.

Above all, Zadig never boasted of his conquests among the women, nor affected to entertain a contemptible opinion of the fair sex. He was generous, and was never afraid of obliging the ungrateful; remembering the grand precept of Zoroaster, "When thou eatest, give to the dogs, should they even bite thee." He was as wise as it is possible for man to be, for he sought to live with the wise.

Instructed in the sciences of the ancient Chaldeans, he understood the principles of natural philosophy, such as they were then supposed to be; and knew as much of metaphysics as hath ever been known in any age, that is, little or nothing at all. He was firmly persuaded, not-

withstanding the new philosophy of the times, that the year consisted of three hundred and sixty-five days and six hours, and that the sun was in the center of the world. But when the principal magi told him, with a haughty and contemptuous air, that his sentiments were of a dangerous tendency, and that it was to be an enemy to the state to believe that the sun revolved round its own axis, and that the year had twelve months, he held his tongue with great modesty and meekness.

Possessed as he was of great riches, and consequently of many friends, blessed with a good constitution, a handsome figure, a mind just and moderate, and a heart noble and sincere, he fondly imagined that he might easily be happy. He was going to be married to Semira, who, in point of beauty, birth, and fortune, was the first match in Babylon. He had a real and virtuous affection for this lady, and she loved him with the most passionate fondness.

The happy moment was almost arrived that was to unite them forever in the bands of wedlock, when happening to take a walk together toward one of the gates of Babylon, under the palm trees that adorn the banks of the Euphrates, they saw some men approaching, armed with sabers and arrows. These were the attendants of young Orcan, the minister's nephew, whom his uncle's creatures had flattered into an opinion that he might do everything with impunity. He had none of the graces nor virtues of Zadig; but thinking himself a much more accomplished man, he was enraged to find that the other was preferred before him. This jealousy, which was merely the effect of his vanity, made him imagine that he was desperately in love with Semira; and accordingly he resolved to carry her off. The ravishers seized her; in the violence of the outrage they wounded her, and made the blood flow from a person, the sight of which would have softened the tigers of Mount Imaus. She pierced the heavens with her complaints. She cried out, "My dear husband! they tear me from the man I adore." Regardless of her own danger,

she was only concerned for the fate of her dear Zadig, who, in the meantime, defended himself with all the strength that courage and love could inspire. Assisted only by two slaves, he put the ravishers to flight and carried home Semira, insensible and bloody as she was.

On opening her eyes and beholding her deliverer, "O Zadig!" said she, "I loved thee formerly as my intended husband; I now love thee as the preserver of my honor and my life." Never was heart more deeply affected than that of Semira. Never did a more charming mouth express more moving sentiments, in those glowing words inspired by a sense of the greatest of all favors, and by the most tender transports of a lawful passion.

Her wound was slight and was soon cured. Zadig was more dangerously wounded; an arrow had pierced him near his eye, and penetrated to a considerable depth. Semira wearied Heaven with her prayers for the recovery of her lover. Her eyes were constantly bathed in tears; she anxiously waited the happy moment when those of Zadig should be able to meet hers; but an abscess growing on the wounded eye gave everything to fear. A messenger was immediately dispatched to Memphis for the great physician Hermes, who came with a numerous retinue. He visited the patient and declared that he would lose his eye. He even foretold the day and hour when this fatal event would happen. "Had it been the right eye," said he, "I could easily have cured it; but the wounds of the left eye are incurable." All Babylon lamented the fate of Zadig, and admired the profound knowledge of Hermes.

In two days the abscess broke of its own accord and Zadig was perfectly cured. Hermes wrote a book to prove that it ought not to have been cured. Zadig did not read it; but, as soon as he was able to go abroad, he went to pay a visit to her in whom all his hopes of happiness were centered, and for whose sake alone he wished to have eyes. Semira had been in the country for three days past. He learned on the road that that fine lady, having openly

declared that she had an unconquerable aversion to one-eyed men, had the night before given her hand to Orcan. At this news he fell speechless to the ground. His sorrow brought him almost to the brink of the grave. He was long indisposed; but reason at last got the better of his affliction, and the severity of his fate served to console him.

"Since," said he, "I have suffered so much from the cruel caprice of a woman educated at court, I must now think of marrying the daughter of a citizen." He pitched upon Azora, a lady of the greatest prudence, and of the best family in town. He married her and lived with her for three months in all the delights of the most tender union. He only observed that she had a little levity; and was too apt to find that those young men who had the most handsome persons were likewise possessed of most wit and virtue.

THE NOSE

One morning Azora returned from a walk in a terrible passion, and uttering the most violent exclamations. "What aileth thee," said he, "my dear spouse? What is it that can thus have discomposed thee?"

"Alas," said she, "thou wouldst be as much enraged as I am hadst thou seen what I have just beheld. I have been to comfort the young widow Cosrou, who, within these two days, hath raised a tomb to her young husband, near the rivulet that washes the skirts of this meadow. She vowed to heaven, in the bitterness of her grief, to remain at this tomb while the water of the rivulet should continue to run near it."

"Well," said Zadig, "she is an excellent woman, and loved her husband with the most sincere affection."

"Ah," replied Azora, "didst thou but know in what she was employed when I went to wait upon her!"

"In what, pray, beautiful Azora? Was she turning the course of the rivulet?"

Azora broke out into such long invectives and loaded the young widow with such bitter reproaches, that Zadig

was far from being pleased with this ostentation of virtue.

Zadig had a friend named Cador, one of those young men in whom his wife discovered more probity and merit than in others. He made him his confidant, and secured his fidelity as much as possible by a considerable present. Azora, having passed two days with a friend in the country, returned home on the third. The servants told her, with tears in their eyes, that her husband died suddenly the night before; that they were afraid to send her an account of this mournful event; and that they had just been depositing his corpse in the tomb of his ancestors, at the end of the garden. She wept, she tore her hair, and swore she would follow him to the grave.

In the evening Cador begged leave to wait upon her, and joined his tears with hers. Next day they wept less, and dined together. Cador told her that his friend had left him the greatest part of his estate; and that he should think himself extremely happy in sharing his fortune with her. The lady wept, fell into a passion, and at last became more mild and gentle. They sat longer at supper than at dinner. They now talked with greater confidence. Azora praised the deceased; but owned that he had many failings from which Cador was free.

During supper Cador complained of a violent pain in his side. The lady, greatly concerned, and eager to serve him, caused all kinds of essences to be brought, with which she anointed him, to try if some of them might not possibly ease him of his pain. She lamented that the great Hermes was not still in Babylon. She even condescended to touch the side in which Cador felt such exquisite pain.

"Art thou subject to this cruel disorder?" said she to him with a compassionate air.

"It sometimes brings me," replied Cador, "to the brink of the grave; and there is but one remedy that can give me relief, and that is to apply to my side the nose of a man who is lately dead."

"A strange remedy, indeed!" said Azora.

"Not more strange," replied he, "than the sachels of Arnon against the apoplexy." This reason, added to the great merit of the young man, at last determined the lady.

"After all," says she, "when my husband shall cross the bridge Tchinavar, in his journey to the other world, the angel Asrael will not refuse him a passage because his nose is a little shorter in the second life than it was in the first." She then took a razor, went to her husband's tomb, bedewed it with her tears, and drew near to cut off the nose of Zadig, whom she found extended at full length in the tomb. Zadig arose, holding his nose with one hand, and, putting back the razor with the other, "Madam," said he, "don't exclaim so violently against young Cosrou; the project of cutting off my nose is equal to that of turning the course of a rivulet."

THE DOG AND THE HORSE

ZADIG found by experience that the first month of marriage, as it is written in the book of Zend, is the moon of honey, and that the second is the moon of wormwood. He was some time after obliged to repudiate Azora, who became too difficult to be pleased; and he then sought for happiness in the study of nature. "No man," said he, "can be happier than a philosopher who reads in this great book which God hath placed before our eyes. The truths he discovers are his own, he nourishes and exalts his soul; he lives in peace; he fears nothing from men; and his tender spouse will not come to cut off his nose."

Possessed of these ideas he retired to a country house on the banks of the Euphrates. There he did not employ himself in calculating how many inches of water flow in a second of time under the arches of a bridge, or whether there fell a cube line of rain in the month of the Mouse more than in the month of the Sheep. He never dreamed of making silk of cobwebs, or porcelain of broken bottles; but he chiefly studied the properties of plants and animals;

and soon acquired a sagacity that made him discover a thousand differences where other men see nothing but uniformity.

One day, as he was walking near a little wood, he saw one of the queen's eunuchs running toward him, followed by several officers, who appeared to be in great perplexity, and who ran to and fro like men distracted, eagerly searching for something they had lost of great value. "Young man," said the first eunuch, "hast thou seen the queen's dog?" "It is a female," replied Zadig. "Thou art in the right," returned the first eunuch. "It is a very small she spaniel," added Zadig; "she has lately whelped; she limps on the left forefoot, and has very long ears." "Thou hast seen her," said the first eunuch, quite out of breath. "No," replied Zadig, "I have not seen her, nor did I so much as know that the queen had a dog."

Exactly at the same time, by one of the common freaks of fortune, the finest horse in the king's stable had escaped from the jockey in the plains of Babylon. The principal huntsman and all the other officers ran after him with as much eagerness and anxiety as the first eunuch had done after the spaniel. The principal huntsman addressed himself to Zadig, and asked him if he had not seen the king's horse passing by. "He is the fleetest horse in the king's stable," replied Zadig; "he is five feet high, with very small hoofs, and a tail three feet and a half in length; the studs on his bit are gold of twenty-three carats, and his shoes are silver of eleven pennyweights." "What way did he take? where is he?" demanded the chief huntsman. "I have not seen him," replied Zadig, "and never heard talk of him before."

The principal huntsman and the first eunuch never doubted but that Zadig had stolen the king's horse and the queen's spaniel. They therefore had him conducted before the assembly of the grand desterham, who condemned him to the knout, and to spend the rest of his days in Siberia. Hardly was the sentence passed when the horse and the spaniel were both found. The judges were reduced to the

disagreeable necessity of reversing their sentence; but they condemned Zadig to pay four hundred ounces of gold for having said that he had not seen what he had seen. This fine he was obliged to pay; after which he was permitted to plead his cause before the counsel of the grand desterham, when he spoke to the following effect:

"Ye stars of justice, abyss of sciences, mirrors of truth, who have the weight of lead, the hardness of iron, the splendor of the diamond, and many properties of gold: Since I am permitted to speak before this august assembly, I swear to you by Oramades that I have never seen the queen's respectable spaniel, nor the sacred horse of the king of kings. The truth of the matter was as follows: I was walking toward the little wood, where I afterwards met the venerable eunuch, and the most illustrious chief huntsman. I observed on the sand the traces of an animal, and could easily perceive them to be those of a little dog. The light and long furrows impressed on little eminences of sand between the marks of the paws plainly discovered that it was a female, whose dugs were hanging down, and that therefore she must have whelped a few days before. Other traces of a different kind, that always appeared to have gently brushed the surface of the sand near the marks of the forefeet, showed me that she had very long ears; and as I remarked that there was always a slighter impression made on the sand by one foot than the other three, I found that the spaniel of our august queen was a little lame, if I may be allowed the expression.

"With regard to the horse of the king of kings, you will be pleased to know that, walking in the lanes of this wood, I observed the marks of a horse's shoes, all at equal distances. This must be a horse, said I to myself, that gallops excellently. The dust on the trees in the road that was but seven feet wide was a little brushed off, at the distance of three feet and a half from the middle of the road. This horse, said I, has a tail three feet and a half long, which being whisked to the right and left, has swept away the dust. I observed under the trees that formed

an arbor five feet in height, that the leaves of the branches were newly fallen; from whence I inferred that the horse had touched them, and that he must therefore be five feet high. As to his bit, it must be gold of twenty-three carats, for he had rubbed its bosses against a stone which I knew to be a touchstone, and which I have tried. In a word, from the marks made by his shoes on flints of another kind, I concluded that he was shod with silver eleven deniers fine."

All the judges admired Zadig for his acute and profound discernment. The news of this speech was carried even to the king and queen. Nothing was talked of but Zadig in the antichambers, the chambers, and the cabinet; and though many of the magi were of opinion that he ought to be burned as a sorcerer, the king ordered his officers to restore him the four hundred ounces of gold which he had been obliged to pay. The register, the attorneys, and bailiffs, went to his house with great formality, to carry him back his four hundred ounces. They only retained three hundred and ninety-eight of them to defray the expenses of justice; and their servants demanded their fees.

Zadig saw how extremely dangerous it sometimes is to appear too knowing, and therefore resolved that on the next occasion of the like nature he would not tell what he had seen.

Such an opportunity soon offered. A prisoner of state made his escape, and passed under the window of Zadig's house. Zadig was examined and made no answer. But it was proved that he had looked at the prisoner from this window. For this crime he was condemned to pay five hundred ounces of gold; and, according to the polite custom of Babylon, he thanked his judges for their indulgence.

"Great God!" said he to himself, "what a misfortune it is to walk in a wood through which the queen's spaniel or the king's horse has passed! how dangerous to look out at a window! and how difficult to be happy in this life!"

THE ENVIOUS MAN

ZADIG resolved to comfort himself by philosophy and friendship for the evils he had suffered from fortune. He had in the suburbs of Babylon a house elegantly furnished, in which he assembled all the arts and all the pleasures worthy the pursuit of a gentleman. In the morning his library was open to the learned. In the evening his table was surrounded by good company. But he soon found what very dangerous guests these men of letters are. A warm dispute arose on one of Zoroaster's laws, which forbids the eating of a griffin. "Why," said some of them, "prohibit the eating of a griffin, if there is no such an animal in nature?" "There must necessarily be such an animal," said the others, "since Zoroaster forbids us to eat it." Zadig would fain have reconciled them by saying, "If there are no griffins, we cannot possibly eat them; and thus either way we shall obey Zoroaster."

A learned man who had composed thirteen volumes on the properties of the griffin, and was besides the chief theurgite, hastened away to accuse Zadig before one of the principal magi, named Yebor, the greatest blockhead and therefore the greatest fanatic among the Chaldeans. This man would have impaled Zadig to do honors to the sun, and would then have recited the breviary of Zoroaster with greater satisfaction. The friend Cador (a friend is better than a hundred priests) went to Yebor, and said to him, "Long live the sun and the griffins; beware of punishing Zadig; he is a saint; he has griffins in his inner court and does not eat them; and his accuser is an heretic, who dares to maintain that rabbits have cloven feet and are not unclean."

"Well," said Yebor, shaking his bald pate, "we must impale Zadig for having thought contemptuously of griffins, and the other for having spoken disrespectfully of rabbits." Cador hushed up the affair by means of a maid of

honor with whom he had a love affair, and who had great interest in the College of the Magi. Nobody was impaled.

This levity occasioned a great murmuring among some of the doctors, who from thence predicted the fall of Babylon. "Upon what does happiness depend?" said Zadig. "I am persecuted by everything in the world, even on account of beings that have no existence." He cursed those men of learning, and resolved for the future to live with none but good company.

He assembled at his house the most worthy men and the most beautiful ladies of Babylon. He gave them delicious suppers, often preceded by concerts of music, and always animated by polite conversation, from which he knew how to banish that affectation of wit which is the surest method of preventing it entirely, and of spoiling the pleasure of the most agreeable society. Neither the choice of his friends, nor that of the dishes was made by vanity; for in everything he preferred the substance to the shadow; and by these means he procured that real respect to which he did not aspire.

Opposite to his house lived one Arimazes, a man whose deformed countenance was but a faint picture of his still more deformed mind. His heart was a mixture of malice, pride, and envy. Having never been able to succeed in any of his undertakings, he revenged himself on all around him by loading them with the blackest calumnies. Rich as he was, he found it difficult to procure a set of flatterers. The rattling of the chariots that entered Zadig's court in the evening filled him with uneasiness; the sound of his praises enraged him still more. He sometimes went to Zadig's house, and sat down at table without being desired; where he spoiled all the pleasure of the company, as the harpies are said to infect the viands they touch. It happened that one day he took it in his head to give an entertainment to a lady, who, instead of accepting it, went to sup with Zadig. At another time, as he was talking with Zadig at court, a minister of state came up to them, and invited Zadig to supper without inviting Arimazes.

The most implacable hatred has seldom a more solid foundation. This man, who in Babylon was called the Envious, resolved to ruin Zadig because he was called the Happy. "The opportunity of doing mischief occurs a hundred times in a day, and that of doing good but once a year," as sayeth the wise Zoroaster.

The envious man went to see Zadig, who was walking in his garden with two friends and a lady, to whom he said many gallant things, without any other intention than that of saying them. The conversation turned upon a war which the king had just brought to a happy conclusion against the prince of Hircania, his vassal. Zadig, who had signalized his courage in this short war, bestowed great praises on the king, but greater still on the lady. He took out his pocketbook, and wrote four lines extempore, which he gave to this amiable person to read. His friends begged they might see them; but modesty, or rather a well-regulated self love, would not allow him to grant their request. He knew that extemporary verses are never approved of by any but by the person in whose honor they are written. He therefore tore in two the leaf on which he had wrote them, and threw both the pieces into a thicket of rose-bushes, where the rest of the company sought for them in vain. A slight shower falling soon after obliged them to return to the house. The envious man, who stayed in the garden, continued the search till at last he found a piece of the leaf. It had been torn in such a manner that each half of a line formed a complete sense, and even a verse of a shorter measure; but what was still more surprising, these short verses were found to contain the most injurious reflections on the king. They ran thus:

To flagrant crimes.
His crown he owes,
To peaceful times.
The worst of foes.

The envious man was now happy for the first time of his life. He had it in his power to ruin a person of virtue

and merit. Filled with this fiendlike joy, he found means to convey to the king the satire written by the hand of Zadig, who, together with the lady and his two friends, was thrown into prison.

His trial was soon finished, without his being permitted to speak for himself. As he was going to receive his sentence, the envious man threw himself in his way and told him with a loud voice that his verses were good for nothing. Zadig did not value himself on being a good poet; but it filled him with inexpressible concern to find that he was condemned for high treason; and that the fair lady and his two friends were confined in prison for a crime of which they were not guilty. He was not allowed to speak because his writing spoke for him. Such was the law of Babylon. Accordingly he was conducted to the place of execution, through an immense crowd of spectators, who durst not venture to express their pity for him, but who carefully examined his countenance to see if he died with a good grace. His relations alone were inconsolable, for they could not succeed to his estate. Three fourths of his wealth were confiscated into the king's treasury, and the other fourth was given to the envious man.

Just as he was preparing for death the king's parrot flew from its cage and alighted on a rosebush in Zadig's garden. A peach had been driven thither by the wind from a neighboring tree, and had fallen on a piece of the written leaf of the pocketbook to which it stuck. The bird carried off the peach and the paper and laid them on the king's knee. The king took up the paper with great eagerness and read the words, which formed no sense, and seemed to be the endings of verses. He loved poetry; and there is always some mercy to be expected from a prince of that disposition. The adventure of the parrot set him a-thinking.

The queen, who remembered what had been written on the piece of Zadig's pocketbook, caused it to be brought. They compared the two pieces together and found them

to tally exactly; they then read the verses as Zadig had wrote them.

TYRANTS ARE PRONE TO FLAGRANT CRIMES.
TO CLEMENCY HIS CROWN HE OWES.
TO CONCORD AND TO PEACEFUL TIMES.
LOVE ONLY IS THE WORST OF FOES.

The king gave immediate orders that Zadig should be brought before him, and that his two friends and the lady should be set at liberty. Zadig fell prostrate on the ground before the king and queen; humbly begged their pardon for having made such bad verses and spoke with so much propriety, wit, and good sense, that their majesties desired they might see him again. He did himself that honor, and insinuated himself still farther into their good graces. They gave him all the wealth of the envious man; but Zadig restored him back the whole of it. And this instance of generosity gave no other pleasure to the envious man than that of having preserved his estate.

The king's esteem for Zadig increased every day. He admitted him into all his parties of pleasure, and consulted him in all affairs of state. From that time the queen began to regard him with an eye of tenderness that might one day prove dangerous to herself, to the king, her august comfort, to Zadig, and to the kingdom in general. Zadig now began to think that happiness was not so unattainable as he had formerly imagined.

THE GENEROUS

THE time now arrived for celebrating a grand festival, which returned every five years. It was a custom in Babylon solemnly to declare at the end of every five years which of the citizens had performed the most generous action. The grandees and the magi were the judges. The first satrap, who was charged with the government of the city, published the most noble actions that had passed un-

der his administration. The competition was decided by votes; and the king pronounced the sentence. People came to this solemnity from the extremities of the earth. The conqueror received from the monarch's hand a golden cup adorned with precious stones, his majesty at the same time making him this compliment:

"Receive this reward of thy generosity, and may the gods grant me many subjects like to thee."

This memorable day being come, the king appeared on his throne, surrounded by the grandees, the magi, and the deputies of all nations that came to these games, where glory was acquired not by the swiftness of horses, nor by strength of body, but by virtue. The first satrap recited, with an audible voice, such actions as might entitle the authors of them to this invaluable prize. He did not mention the greatness of soul with which Zadig had restored the envious man his fortune, because it was not judged to be an action worthy of disputing the prize.

He first presented a judge who, having made a citizen lose a considerable cause by a mistake, for which, after all, he was not accountable, had given him the whole of his own estate, which was just equal to what the other had lost.

He next produced a young man who, being desperately in love with a lady whom he was going to marry, had yielded her up to his friend, whose passion for her had almost brought him to the brink of the grave, and at the same time had given him the lady's fortune.

He afterwards produced a soldier who, in the wars of Hircania, had given a still more noble instance of generosity. A party of the enemy having seized his mistress, he fought in her defense with great intrepidity. At that very instant he was informed that another party, at the distance of a few paces, were carrying off his mother; he therefore left his mistress with tears in his eyes and flew to the assistance of his mother. At last he returned to the dear object of his love and found her expiring. He was just going to plunge his sword in his own bosom; but his

mother remonstrating against such a desperate deed, and telling him that he was the only support of her life, he had the courage to endure to live.

The judges were inclined to give the prize to the soldier. But the king took up the discourse and said: "The action of the soldier, and those of the other two, are doubtless very great, but they have nothing in them surprising. Yesterday Zadig performed an action that filled me with wonder. I had a few days before disgraced Coreb, my minister and favorite. I complained of him in the most violent and bitter terms; all my courtiers assured me that I was too gentle and seemed to vie with each other in speaking ill of Coreb. I asked Zadig what he thought of him, and he had the courage to commend him. I have read in our histories of many people who have atoned for an error by the surrender of their fortune; who have resigned a mistress; or preferred a mother to the object of their affection; but never before did I hear of a courtier who spoke favorably of a disgraced minister that labored under the displeasure of his sovereign. I give to each of those whose generous actions have been now recited twenty thousand pieces of gold; but the cup I give to Zadig."

"May it please your majesty," said Zadig, "thyself alone deservest the cup; thou hast performed an action of all others the most uncommon and meritorious, since, notwithstanding thy being a powerful king, thou wast not offended at thy slave when he presumed to oppose thy passion." The king and Zadig were equally the object of admiration. The judge, who had given his estate to his client; the lover, who had resigned his mistress to a friend; and the soldier, who had preferred the safety of his mother to that of his mistress, received the king's presents and saw their names enrolled in the catalogue of generous men. Zadig had the cup, and the king acquired the reputation of a good prince, which he did not long enjoy. The day was celebrated by feasts that lasted longer than the law enjoined; and the memory of it is still preserved in Asia.

Zadig said, "Now I am happy at last"; but he found himself fatally deceived.

THE MINISTER

The king had lost his first minister and chose Zadig to supply his place. All the ladies in Babylon applauded the choice; for since the foundation of the empire there had never been such a young minister. But all the courtiers were filled with jealousy and vexation. The envious man in particular was troubled with a spitting of blood and a prodigious inflammation in his nose. Zadig, having thanked the king and queen for their goodness, went likewise to thank the parrot. "Beautiful bird," said he, "'tis thou that hast saved my life and made me first minister. The queen's spaniel and the king's horse did me a great deal of mischief; but thou hast done me much good. Upon such slender threads as these do the fates of mortals hang! But," added he, "this happiness perhaps will vanish very soon."

"Soon," replied the parrot.

Zadig was somewhat startled at this word. But as he was a good natural philosopher and did not believe parrots to be prophets, he quickly recovered his spirits and resolved to execute his duty to the best of his power.

He made everyone feel the sacred authority of the laws, but no one felt the weight of his dignity. He never checked the deliberation of the diran; and every vizier might give his opinion without the fear of incurring the minister's displeasure. When he gave judgment, it was not he that gave it, it was the law; the rigor of which, however, whenever it was too severe, he always took care to soften; and when laws were wanting, the equity of his decisions was such as might easily have made them pass for those of Zoroaster. It is to him that the nations are indebted for this grand principle, to wit, that it is better to run the risk of sparing the guilty than to condemn the innocent. He imagined that laws were made as well to secure the people from the suffering of injuries as to re-

strain them from the commission of crimes. His chief talent consisted in discovering the truth, which all men seek to obscure.

This great talent he put in practice from the very beginning of his administration. A famous merchant of Babylon, who died in the Indies, divided his estate equally between his two sons, after having disposed of their sister in marriage, and left a present of thirty thousand pieces of gold to that son who should be found to have loved him best. The eldest raised a tomb to his memory; the youngest increased his sister's portion, by giving her part of his inheritance. Everyone said that the eldest son loved his father best, and the youngest his sister; and that the thirty thousand pieces belonged to the eldest.

Zadig sent for both of them, the one after the other. To the eldest he said: "Thy father is not dead; he is recovered of his last illness, and is returning to Babylon." "God be praised," replied the young man; "but his tomb cost me a considerable sum." Zadig afterwards said the same to the youngest. "God be praised," said he, "I will go and restore to my father all that I have; but I could wish that he would leave my sister what I have given her." "Thou shalt restore nothing," replied Zadig, "and thou shalt have the thirty thousand pieces, for thou art the son who loves his father best."

THE DISPUTES AND THE AUDIENCES

In this manner he daily discovered the subtilty of his genius and the goodness of his heart. The people at once admired and loved him. He passed for the happiest man in the world. The whole empire resounded with his name. All the ladies ogled him. All the men praised him for his justice. The learned regarded him as an oracle; and even the priests confessed that he knew more than the old archmagi Yebor. They were now so far from prosecuting him on account of the griffin, that they believed nothing but what he thought credible.

There had reigned in Babylon, for the space of fifteen hundred years, a violent contest that had divided the empire into two sects. The one pretended that they ought to enter the temple of Mitra with the left foot foremost; the other held this custom in detestation and always entered with the right foot first. The people waited with great impatience for the day on which the solemn feast of the sacred fire was to be celebrated, to see which sect Zadig would favor. All the world had their eyes fixed on his two feet, and the whole city was in the utmost suspense and perturbation. Zadig jumped into the temple with his feet joined together, and afterwards proved, in an eloquent discourse, that the Sovereign of heaven and earth, who accepted not the persons of men, makes no distinction between the right and left foot. The envious man and his wife alleged that his discourse was not figurative enough, and that he did not make the rocks and mountains to dance with sufficient agility.

"He is dry," said they, "and void of genius; he does not make the flea to fly, and stars to fall, nor the sun to melt wax; he has not the true Oriental style." Zadig contented himself with having the style of reason. All the world favored him, not because he was in the right road or followed the dictates of reason, or was a man of real merit, but because he was prime vizier.

He terminated with the same happy address the grand difference between the white and the black magi. The former maintained that it was the height of impiety to pray to God with the face turned toward the east in winter; the latter asserted that God abhorred the prayers of those who turned toward the west in summer. Zadig decreed that every man should be allowed to turn as he pleased.

Thus he found out the happy secret of finishing all affairs, whether of a private or public nature, in the morning. The rest of the day he employed in superintending and promoting the embellishments of Babylon. He exhibited tragedies that drew tears from the eyes of the spectators, and comedies that shook their sides with laughter;

a custom which had long been disused, and which his good taste now induced him to revive. He never affected to be more knowing in the polite arts than the artists themselves; he encouraged them by rewards and honors, and was never jealous of their talents. In the evening the king was highly entertained with his conversation, and the queen still more. "Great minister!" said the king. "Amiable minister!" said the queen; and both of them added, "It would have been a great loss to the state had such a man been hanged."

Never was man in power obliged to give so many audiences to the ladies. Most of them came to consult him about no business at all, that so they might have some business with him. But none of them won his attention.

Meanwhile Zadig perceived that his thoughts were always distracted, as well when he gave audience as when he sat in judgment. He did not know to what to attribute this absence of mind; and that was his only sorrow.

He had a dream in which he imagined that he laid himself down upon a heap of dry herbs, among which there were many prickly ones that gave him great uneasiness, and that he afterwards reposed himself on a soft bed of roses from which there sprung a serpent that wounded him to the heart with its sharp and venomed tongue. "Alas," said he, "I have long lain on these dry and prickly herbs, I am now on the bed of roses; but what shall be the serpent?"

JEALOUSY

Zadig's calamities sprung even from his happiness and especially from his merit. He every day conversed with the king and Astarte, his august comfort. The charms of his conversation were greatly heightened by that desire of pleasing, which is to the mind what dress is to beauty. His youth and graceful appearance insensibly made an impression on Astarte, which she did not at first perceive. Her passion grew and flourished in the bosom of innocence. Without fear or scruple, she indulged the pleasing satis-

faction of seeing and hearing a man who was so dear to her husband and to the empire in general. She was continually praising him to the king. She talked of him to her women, who were always sure to improve on her praises. And thus everything contributed to pierce her heart with a dart, of which she did not seem to be sensible. She made several presents to Zadig, which discovered a greater spirit of gallantry than she imagined. She intended to speak to him only as a queen satisfied with his services and her expressions were sometimes those of a woman in love.

Astarte was much more beautiful than that Semira who had such a strong aversion to one-eyed men, or that other woman who had resolved to cut off her husband's nose. Her unreserved familiarity, her tender expressions, at which she began to blush; and her eyes, which, though she endeavored to divert them to other objects, were always fixed upon his, inspired Zadig with a passion that filled him with astonishment. He struggled hard to get the better of it. He called to his aid the precepts of philosophy, which had always stood him in stead; but from thence, though he could derive the light of knowledge, he could procure no remedy to cure the disorders of his love-sick heart. Duty, gratitude, and violated majesty presented themselves to his mind as so many avenging gods. He struggled; he conquered; but this victory, which he was obliged to purchase afresh every moment, cost him many sighs and tears. He no longer dared to speak to the queen with that sweet and charming familiarity which had been so agreeable to them both. His countenance was covered with a cloud. His conversation was constrained and incoherent. His eyes were fixed on the ground; and when, in spite of all his endeavors to the contrary, they encountered those of the queen, they found them bathed in tears and darting arrows of flame. They seemed to say, We adore each other and yet are afraid to love; we both burn with a fire which we both condemn.

Zadig left the royal presence full of perplexity and

despair, and having his heart oppressed with a burden which he was no longer able to bear. In the violence of his perturbation he involuntarily betrayed the secret to his friend Cador, in the same manner as a man who, having long supported the fits of a cruel disease, discovered his pain by a cry extorted from him by a more severe fit and by the cold sweat that covers his brow.

"I have already discovered," said Cador, "the sentiments which thou wouldst fain conceal from thyself. The symptoms by which the passions show themselves are certain and infallible. Judge, my dear Zadig, since I have read thy heart, whether the king will not discover something in it that may give him offense. He has no other fault but that of being the most jealous man in the world. Thou canst resist the violence of thy passion with greater fortitude than the queen because thou art a philosopher, and because thou art Zadig. Astarte is a woman: she suffers her eyes to speak with so much the more imprudence, as she does not as yet think herself guilty. Conscious of her innocence she unhappily neglects those external appearances which are so necessary. I shall tremble for her so long as she has nothing wherewithal to reproach herself. Were ye both of one mind, ye might easily deceive the whole world. A growing passion, which we endeavor to suppress, discovers itself in spite of all our efforts to the contrary; but love, when gratified, is easily concealed."

Zadig trembled at the proposal of betraying the king, his benefactor; and never was he more faithful to his prince than when guilty of an involuntary crime against him.

Meanwhile the queen mentioned the name of Zadig so frequently and with such a blushing and downcast look; she was sometimes so lively and sometimes so perplexed when she spoke to him in the king's presence, and was seized with such deep thoughtfulness at his going away, that the king began to be troubled. He believed all that he saw and imagined all that he did not see. He particularly remarked that his wife's shoes were blue and

that Zadig's shoes were blue; that his wife's ribbons were yellow and that Zadig's bonnet was yellow; and these were terrible symptoms to a prince of so much delicacy. In his jealous mind suspicions were turned into certainty.

All the slaves of kings and queens are so many spies over their hearts. They soon observed that Astarte was tender and that Moabdar was jealous. The envious man brought false report to the king. The monarch now thought of nothing but in what manner he might best execute his vengeance. He one night resolved to poison the queen and in the morning to put Zadig to death by the bowstring. The orders were given to a merciless eunuch, who commonly executed his acts of vengeance. There happened at that time to be in the king's chamber a little dwarf, who, though dumb, was not deaf. He was allowed, on account of his insignificance, to go wherever he pleased, and as a domestic animal, was a witness of what passed in the most profound secrecy. This little mute was strongly attached to the queen and Zadig. With equal horror and surprise he heard the cruel orders given. But how to prevent the fatal sentence that in a few hours was to be carried into execution! He could not write, but he could paint; and excelled particularly in drawing a striking resemblance. He employed a part of the night in sketching out with his pencil what he meant to impart to the queen. The piece represented the king in one corner, boiling with rage, and giving orders to the eunuch; a bowstring, and a bowl on a table; the queen in the middle of the picture, expiring in the arms of her woman, and Zadig strangled at her feet. The horizon represented a rising sun, to express that this shocking execution was to be performed in the morning. As soon as he had finished the picture he ran to one of Astarte's women, awakened her, and made her understand that she must immediately carry it to the queen.

At midnight a messenger knocks at Zadig's door, awakes him, and gives him a note from the queen. He doubts whether it is a dream; and opens the letter with a

trembling hand. But how great was his surprise! and who can express the consternation and despair into which he was thrown upon reading these words: "Fly this instant, or thou art a dead man. Fly, Zadig, I conjure thee by our mutual love and my yellow ribbons. I have not been guilty, but I find I must die like a criminal."

Zadig was hardly able to speak. He sent for Cador, and, without uttering a word, gave him the note. Cador forced him to obey, and forthwith to take the road to Memphis. "Shouldst thou dare," said he, "to go in search of the queen, thou wilt hasten her death. Shouldst thou speak to the king, thou wilt infallibly ruin her. I will take upon me the charge of her destiny; follow thy own. I will spread a report that thou hast taken the road to India. I will soon follow thee, and inform thee of all that shall have passed in Babylon." At that instant, Cador caused two of the swiftest dromedaries to be brought to a private gate of the palace. Upon one of these he mounted Zadig, whom he was obliged to carry to the door, and who was ready to expire with grief. He was accompanied by a single domestic; and Cador, plunged in sorrow and astonishment, soon lost sight of his friend.

This illustrious fugitive arriving on the side of a hill, from whence he could take a view of Babylon, turned his eyes toward the queen's palace, and fainted away at the sight; nor did he recover his senses but to shed a torrent of tears and to wish for death. At length, after his thoughts had been long engrossed in lamenting the unhappy fate of the loveliest woman and the greatest queen in the world, he for a moment turned his views on himself and cried: "What then is human life? O virtue, how hast thou served me! Two women have basely deceived me, and now a third, who is innocent, and more beautiful than both the others, is going to be put to death! Whatever good I have done hath been to me a continual source of calamity and affliction; and I have only been raised to the height of grandeur, to be tumbled down the most horrid precipice of misfortune." Filled with these gloomy

reflections, his eyes overspread with the veil of grief, his countenance covered with the paleness of death, and his soul plunged in an abyss of the blackest despair, he continued his journey toward Egypt.

THE WOMAN BEATEN

Zadig directed his course by the stars. The constellation of Orion and the splendid Dog Star guided his steps toward the pole of Cassiopæa. He admired those vast globes of light, which appear to our eyes but as so many little sparks, while the earth, which in reality is only an imperceptible point in nature, appears to our fond imaginations as something so grand and noble.

He then represented to himself the human species as it really is, as a parcel of insects devouring one another on a little atom of clay. This true image seemed to annihilate his misfortunes, by making him sensible of the nothingness of his own being, and of that of Babylon. His soul launched out into infinity, and, detached from the senses, contemplated the immutable order of the universe. But when afterwards, returning to himself, and entering into his own heart, he considered that Astarte had perhaps died for him, the universe vanished from his sight, and he beheld nothing in the whole compass of nature but Astarte expiring and Zadig unhappy. While he thus alternately gave up his mind to this flux and reflux of sublime philosophy and intolerable grief, he advanced toward the frontiers of Egypt; and his faithful domestic was already in the first village, in search of a lodging.

Upon reaching the village Zadig generously took the part of a woman attacked by her jealous lover. The combat grew so fierce that Zadig slew the lover. The Egyptians were then just and humane. The people conducted Zadig to the town house. They first of all ordered his wound to be dressed, and then examined him and his servant apart, in order to discover the truth. They found that Zadig was not an assassin; but as he was guilty of having

killed a man, the law condemned him to be a slave. His two camels were sold for the benefit of the town; all the gold he had brought with him was distributed among the inhabitants; and his person, as well as that of the companion of his journey, was exposed to sale in the marketplace.

An Arabian merchant, named Setoc, made the purchase; but as the servant was fitter for labor than the master, he was sold at a higher price. There was no comparison between the two men. Thus Zadig became a slave subordinate to his own servant. They were linked together by a chain fastened to their feet, and in this condition they followed the Arabian merchant to his house.

By the way Zadig comforted his servant, and exhorted him to patience; but he could not help making, according to his usual custom, some reflections on human life. "I see," said he, "that the unhappiness of my fate hath an influence on thine. Hitherto everything has turned out to me in a most unaccountable manner. I have been condemned to pay a fine for having seen the marks of a spaniel's feet. I thought that I should once have been impaled on account of a griffin. I have been sent to execution for having made some verses in praise of the king. I have been upon the point of being strangled because the queen had yellow ribbons; and now I am a slave with thee, because a brutal wretch beat his mistress. Come, let us keep a good heart; all this perhaps will have an end. The Arabian merchants must necessarily have slaves; and why not me as well as another, since, as well as another, I am a man? This merchant will not be cruel; he must treat his slaves well, if he expects any advantage from them." But while he spoke thus, his heart was entirely engrossed by the fate of the Queen of Babylon.

Two days after, the merchant Setoc set out for Arabia Deserta, with his slaves and his camels. His tribe dwelt near the Desert of Oreb. The journey was long and painful. Setoc set a much greater value on the servant than the master, because the former was more expert in loading

the camels; and all the little marks of distinction were shown to him. A camel having died within two days' journey of Oreb, his burden was divided and laid on the backs of the servants; and Zadig had his share among the rest.

Setoc laughed to see all his slaves walking with their bodies inclined. Zadig took the liberty to explain to him the cause, and inform him of the laws of the balance. The merchant was astonished, and began to regard him with other eyes. Zadig, finding he had raised his curiosity, increased it still further by acquainting him with many things that related to commerce, the specific gravity of metals, and commodities under an equal bulk; the properties of several useful animals; and the means of rendering those useful that are not naturally so. At last Setoc began to consider Zadig as a sage, and preferred him to his companion, whom he had formerly so much esteemed. He treated him well and had no cause to repent of his kindness.

THE STONE

As soon as Setoc arrived among his own tribe he demanded the payment of five hundred ounces of silver, which he had lent to a Jew in presence of two witnesses; but as the witnesses were dead, and the debt could not be proved, the Hebrew appropriated the merchant's money to himself, and piously thanked God for putting it in his power to cheat an Arabian. Setoc imparted this troublesome affair to Zadig, who was now become his counsel.

"In what place," said Zadig, "didst thou lend the five hundred ounces to this infidel?"

"Upon a large stone," replied the merchant, "that lies near Mount Oreb."

"What is the character of thy debtor?" said Zadig.

"That of a knave," returned Setoc.

"But I ask thee whether he is lively or phlegmatic, cautious or imprudent?"

"He is, of all bad payers," said Setoc, "the most lively fellow I ever knew."

"Well," resumed Zadig, "allow me to plead thy cause." In effect Zadig, having summoned the Jew to the tribunal, addressed the judge in the following terms: "Pillow of the throne of equity, I come to demand of this man, in the name of my master, five hundred ounces of silver, which he refuses to pay."

"Hast thou any witnesses?" said the judge.

"No, they are dead; but there remains a large stone upon which the money was counted; and if it please thy grandeur to order the stone to be sought for, I hope that it will bear witness. The Hebrew and I will tarry here till the stone arrives; I will send for it at my master's expense."

"With all my heart," replied the judge, and immediately applied himself to the discussion of other affairs.

When the court was going to break up, the judge said to Zadig, "Well, friend, is not thy stone come yet?"

The Hebrew replied with a smile, "Thy grandeur may stay here till the morrow, and after all not see the stone. It is more than six miles from hence; and it would require fifteen men to move it."

"Well," cried Zadig, "did not I say that the stone would bear witness? Since this man knows where it is, he thereby confesses that it was upon it that the money was counted." The Hebrew was disconcerted, and was soon after obliged to confess the truth. The judge ordered him to be fastened to the stone, without meat or drink, till he should restore the five hundred ounces, which were soon after paid.

The slave Zadig and the stone were held in great repute in Arabia.

THE FUNERAL PILE

Setoc, charmed with the happy issue of this affair, made his slave his intimate friend. He had now conceived as great esteem for him as ever the King of Babylon had done; and Zadig was glad that Setoc had no wife. He discovered in his master a good natural disposition, much

probity of heart, and a great share of good sense; but he was sorry to see that, according to the ancient custom of Arabia, he adored the host of heaven; that is, the sun, moon, and stars. He sometimes spoke to him on this subject with great prudence and discretion. At last he told him that these bodies were like all other bodies in the universe, and no more deserving of our homage than a tree or a rock.

"But," said Setoc, "they are eternal beings; and it is from them we derive all we enjoy. They animate nature; they regulate the seasons; and, besides, are removed at such an immense distance from us that we cannot help revering them."

"Thou receivest more advantage," replied Zadig, "from the waters of the Red Sea, which carry thy merchandise to the Indies. Why may not it be as ancient as the stars? and if thou adorest what is placed at a distance from thee, thou oughtest to adore the land of the Gangarides, which lies at the extremity of the earth."

"No," said Setoc, "the brightness of the stars command my adoration."

At night Zadig lighted up a great number of candles in the tent where he was to sup with Setoc; and the moment his patron appeared, he fell on his knees before these lighted tapers, and said, "Eternal and shining luminaries! be ye always propitious to me." Having thus said, he sat down at table, without taking the least notice of Setoc.

"What art thou doing?" said Setoc to him in amaze.

"I act like thee," replied Zadig, "I adore these candles, and neglect their master and mine." Setoc comprehended the profound sense of this apologue. The wisdom of his slave sunk deep into his soul; he no longer offered incense to the creatures, but adored the eternal Being who made them.

There prevailed at that time in Arabia a shocking custom, sprung originally from Scythia, and which, being established in the Indies by the credit of the Brahmans, threatened to overrun all the East. When a married man

died, and his beloved wife aspired to the character of a saint, she burned herself publicly on the body of her husband. This was a solemn feast and was called the Funeral Pile of Widowhood, and that tribe in which most women had been burned was the most respected.

An Arabian of Setoc's tribe being dead, his widow, whose name was Almona, and who was very devout, published the day and hour when she intended to throw herself into the fire, amidst the sound of drums and trumpets. Zadig remonstrated against this horrible custom; he showed Setoc how inconsistent it was with the happiness of mankind to suffer young widows to burn themselves every other day, widows who were capable of giving children to the state, or at least of educating those they already had; and he convinced him that it was his duty to do all that lay in his power to abolish such a barbarous practice.

"The women," said Setoc, "have possessed the right of burning themselves for more than a thousand years; and who shall dare to abrogate a law which time hath rendered sacred? Is there anything more respectable than ancient abuses?"

"Reason is more ancient," replied Zadig; "meanwhile, speak thou to the chiefs of the tribes and I will go to wait on the young widow."

Accordingly he was introduced to her; and, after having insinuated himself into her good graces by some compliments on her beauty and told her what a pity it was to commit so many charms to the flames, he at last praised her for her constancy and courage. "Thou must surely have loved thy husband," said he to her, "with the most passionate fondness."

"Who, I?" replied the lady. "I loved him not at all. He was a brutal, jealous, insupportable wretch; but I am firmly resolved to throw myself on his funeral pile."

"It would appear then," said Zadig, "that there must be a very delicious pleasure in being burned alive."

"Oh! it makes nature shudder," replied the lady, "but

that must be overlooked. I am a devotee, and I should lose my reputation and all the world would despise me if I did not burn myself." Zadig having made her acknowledge that she burned herself to gain the good opinion of others and to gratify her own vanity, entertained her with a long discourse, calculated to make her a little in love with life, and even went so far as to inspire her with some degree of good will for the person who spoke to her.

"Alas!" said the lady, "I believe I should desire thee to marry me."

Zadig's mind was too much engrossed with the idea of Astarte not to elude this declaration; but he instantly went to the chiefs of the tribes, told them what had passed, and advised them to make a law, by which a widow should not be permitted to burn herself till she had conversed privately with a young man for the space of an hour. Since that time not a single woman hath burned herself in Arabia. They were indebted to Zadig alone for destroying in one day a cruel custom that had lasted for so many ages and thus he became the benefactor of Arabia.

THE SUPPER

Setoc, who could not separate himself from this man, in whom dwelt wisdom, carried him to the great fair of Balzora, whither the richest merchants in the earth resorted. Zadig was highly pleased to see so many men of different countries united in the same place. He considered the whole universe as one large family assembled at Balzora.

Setoc, after having sold his commodities at a very high price, returned to his own tribe with his friend Zadig; who learned, upon his arrival, that he had been tried in his absence, and was now going to be burned by a slow fire. Only the friendship of Almona saved his life. Like so many pretty women, she possessed great influence with the priesthood. Zadig thought it best to leave Arabia.

Setoc was so charmed with the ingenuity and address

of Almona that he made her his wife. Zadig departed, after having thrown himself at the feet of his fair deliverer. Setoc and he took leave of each other with tears in their eyes, swearing an eternal friendship, and promising that the first of them that should acquire a large fortune should share it with the other.

Zadig directed his course along the frontiers of Assyria, still musing on the unhappy Astarte, and reflecting on the severity of fortune which seemed determined to make him the sport of her cruelty and the object of her persecution. "What," said he to himself, "four hundred ounces of gold for having seen a spaniel! condemned to lose my head for four bad verses in praise of the king! ready to be strangled because the queen had shoes of the color of my bonnet! reduced to slavery for having succored a woman who was beat! and on the point of being burned for having saved the lives of all the young widows of Arabia!"

THE ROBBER

Arriving on the frontiers which divide Arabia Petræa from Syria, he passed by a pretty strong castle, from which a party of armed Arabians sallied forth. They instantly surrounded him and cried, "All thou hast belongs to us, and thy person is the property of our master." Zadig replied by drawing his sword; his servant, who was a man of courage, did the same. They killed the first Arabians that presumed to lay hands on them; and, though the number was redoubled, they were not dismayed, but resolved to perish in the conflict. Two men defended themselves against a multitude; and such a combat could not last long.

The master of the castle, whose name was Arbogad, having observed from a window the prodigies of valor performed by Zadig, conceived a high esteem for this heroic stranger. He descended in haste and went in person to call off his men and deliver the two travelers.

"All that passes over my lands," said he, "belongs to

me, as well as what I find upon the lands of others; but thou seemest to be a man of such undaunted courage that I will exempt thee from the common law." He then conducted him to his castle, ordering his men to treat him well; and in the evening Arbogad supped with Zadig.

The lord of the castle was one of those Arabians who are commonly called robbers; but he now and then performed some good actions amid a multitude of bad ones. He robbed with a furious rapacity, and granted favors with great generosity; he was intrepid in action; affable in company; a debauchee at table, but gay in debauchery; and particularly remarkable for his frank and open behavior. He was highly pleased with Zadig, whose lively conversation lengthened the repast.

At last Arbogad said to him: "I advise thee to enroll thy name in my catalogue; thou canst not do better; this is not a bad trade; and thou mayest one day become what I am at present."

"May I take the liberty of asking thee," said Zadig, "how long thou hast followed this noble profession?"

"From my most tender youth," replied the lord. "I was a servant to a pretty good-natured Arabian, but could not endure the hardships of my situation. I was vexed to find that fate had given me no share of the earth, which equally belongs to all men. I imparted the cause of my uneasiness to an old Arabian, who said to me: 'My son, do not despair; there was once a grain of sand that lamented that it was no more than a neglected atom in the deserts; at the end of a few years it became a diamond; and is now the brightest ornament in the crown of the king of the Indies.' This discourse made a deep impression on my mind. I was the grain of sand, and I resolved to become the diamond. I began by stealing two horses; I soon got a party of companions; I put myself in a condition to rob small caravans; and thus, by degrees, I destroyed the difference which had formerly subsisted between me and other men. I had my share of the good

things of this world; and was even recompensed with usury for the hardships I had suffered. I was greatly respected, and became the captain of a band of robbers. I seized this castle by force. The Satrap of Syria had a mind to dispossess me of it; but I was too rich to have anything to fear. I gave the satrap a handsome present, by which means I preserved my castle and increased my possessions. He even appointed me treasurer of the tributes which Arabia Petræa pays to the king of kings. I perform my office of receiver with great punctuality; but take the freedom to dispense with that of paymaster.

"The grand Desterham of Babylon sent hither a pretty satrap in the name of King Moabdar, to have me strangled. This man arrived with his orders: I was apprised of all; I caused to be strangled in his presence the four persons he had brought with him to draw the noose; after which I asked him how much his commission of strangling me might be worth. He replied, that his fees would amount to above three hundred pieces of gold. I then convinced him that he might gain more by staying with me. I made him an inferior robber; and he is now one of my best and richest officers. If thou wilt take my advice thy success may be equal to his; never was there a better season for plunder, since King Moabdar is killed, and all Babylon thrown into confusion."

"Moabdar killed!" said Zadig, "and what is become of Queen Astarte?"

"I know not," replied Arbogad. "All I know is, that Moabdar lost his senses and was killed; that Babylon is a scene of disorder and bloodshed; that all the empire is desolated; that there are some fine strokes to be struck yet; and that, for my own part, I have struck some that are admirable."

"But the queen," said Zadig; "for heaven's sake, knowest thou nothing of the queen's fate?"

"Yes," replied he, "I have heard something of a prince of Hircania; if she was not killed in the tumult, she is probably one of his concubines; but I am much fonder of

booty than news. I have taken several women in my excursions; but I keep none of them. I sell them at a high price, when they are beautiful, without inquiring who they are. In commodities of this kind rank makes no difference, and a queen that is ugly will never find a merchant. Perhaps I may have sold Queen Astarte; perhaps she is dead; but, be it as it will, it is of little consequence to me, and I should imagine of as little to thee." So saying he drank a large draught which threw all his ideas into such confusion that Zadig could obtain no further information.

Zadig remained for some time without speech, sense, or motion. Arbogad continued drinking; told stories; constantly repeated that he was the happiest man in the world; and exhorted Zadig to put himself in the same condition. At last the soporiferous fumes of the wine lulled him into a gentle repose.

Zadig passed the night in the most violent perturbation. "What," said he, "did the king lose his senses? and is he killed? I cannot help lamenting his fate. The empire is rent in pieces; and this robber is happy. O fortune! O destiny! A robber is happy, and the most beautiful of nature's works hath perhaps perished in a barbarous manner or lives in a state worse than death. O Astarte! what is become of thee?"

At daybreak he questioned all those he met in the castle; but they were all busy, and he received no answer. During the night they had made a new capture, and they were now employed in dividing the spoils. All he could obtain in this hurry and confusion was an opportunity of departing, which he immediately embraced, plunged deeper than ever in the most gloomy and mournful reflections.

Zadig proceeded on his journey with a mind full of disquiet and perplexity, and wholly employed on the unhappy Astarte, on the King of Babylon, on his faithful friend Cador, on the happy robber Arbogad; in a word, on all the misfortunes and disappointments he had hitherto suffered.

THE FISHERMAN

At a few leagues' distance from Arbogad's castle he came to the banks of a small river, still deploring his fate, and considering himself as the most wretched of mankind. He saw a fisherman lying on the brink of the river, scarcely holding, in his weak and feeble hand, a net which he seemed ready to drop, and lifting up his eyes to Heaven.

"I am certainly," said the fisherman, "the most unhappy man in the world. I was universally allowed to be the most famous dealer in cream cheese in Babylon, and yet I am ruined. I had the most handsome wife that any man in my station could have; and by her I have been betrayed. I had still left a paltry house, and that I have seen pillaged and destroyed. At last I took refuge in this cottage, where I have no other resource than fishing, and yet I cannot catch a single fish. Oh, my net! no more will I throw thee into the water; I will throw myself in thy place." So saying, he arose and advanced forward in the attitude of a man ready to throw himself into the river, and thus to finish his life.

"What!" said Zadig to himself, "are there men as wretched as I?" His eagerness to save the fisherman's life was as this reflection. He ran to him, stopped him, and spoke to him with a tender and compassionate air. It is commonly supposed that we are less miserable when we have companions in our misery. This, acording to Zoroaster, does not proceed from malice, but necessity. We feel ourselves insensibly drawn to an unhappy person as to one like ourselves. The joy of the happy would be an insult; but two men in distress are like two slender trees, which, mutually supporting each other, fortify themselves against the storm.

"Why," said Zadig to the fisherman, "dost thou sink under thy misfortunes?"

"Because," replied he, "I see no means of relief. I was the most considerable man in the village of Derlback, near

Babylon, and with the assistance of my wife I made the best cream cheese in the empire. Queen Astarte and the famous minister Zadig were extremely fond of them."

Zadig, transported, said, "What, knowest thou nothing of the queen's fate?"

"No, my lord," replied the fisherman; "but I know that neither the queen nor Zadig has paid me for my cream cheeses; that I have lost my wife, and am now reduced to despair."

"I flatter myself," said Zadig, "that thou wilt not lose all thy money. I have heard of this Zadig; he is an honest man; and if he returns to Babylon, as he expects, he will give thee more than he owes thee. Believe me, go to Babylon. I shall be there before thee, because I am on horseback, and thou art on foot. Apply to the illustrious Cador; tell him thou hast met his friend; wait for me at his house; go, perhaps thou wilt not always be unhappy.

"O powerful Oromazes!" continued he, "thou employest me to comfort this man; whom wilt thou employ to give me consolation?" So saying, he gave the fisherman half the money he had brought from Arabia. The fisherman, struck with surprise and ravished with joy, kissed the feet of the friend of Cador, and said, "Thou are surely an angel sent from Heaven to save me!"

Meanwhile, Zadig continued to make fresh inquiries, and to shed tears. "What, my lord!" cried the fisherman, "art thou then so unhappy, thou who bestowest favors?"

"An hundred times more unhappy than thou art," replied Zadig.

"But how is it possible," said the good man, "that the giver can be more wretched than the receiver?"

"Because," replied Zadig, "thy greatest misery arose from poverty, and mine is seated in the heart."

"Did Orcan take thy wife from thee?" said the fisherman.

This word recalled to Zadig's mind the whole of his adventures. He repeated the catalogue of his misfortunes, beginning with the queen's spaniel, and ending with his

arrival at the castle of the robber Arbogad. "Ah!" said he to the fisherman, "Orcan deserves to be punished; but it is commonly such men as those that are the favorites of fortune. However, go thou to the house of Lord Cador, and there wait my arrival." They then parted, the fisherman walked, thanking Heaven for the happiness of his condition; and Zadig rode, accusing fortune for the hardness of his lot.

THE BASILISK

ARRIVING in a beautiful meadow, he there saw several women, who were searching for something with great application. He took the liberty to approach one of them, and to ask if he might have the honor to assist them in their search. "Take care that thou dost not," replied the Syrian; "what we are searching for can be touched only by women."

"Strange," said Zadig, "may I presume to ask thee what it is that women only are permitted to touch?"

"It is a basilisk," said she.

"A basilisk, madam! and for what purpose, pray, dost thou seek for a basilisk?"

"It is for our lord and master Ogul, whose cattle thou seest on the bank of that river at the end of the meadow. We are his most humble slaves. The lord Ogul is sick. His physician hath ordered him to eat a basilisk, stewed in rose water; and as it is a very rare animal, and can only be taken by women, the lord Ogul hath promised to choose for his well-beloved wife the woman that shall bring him a basilisk; let me go on in my search; for thou seest what I shall lose if I am prevented by my companions."

Zadig left her and the other Assyrians to search for their basilisk, and continued to walk in the meadow; when coming to the brink of a small rivulet, he found another lady lying on the grass, and who was not searching for anything. Her person seemed to be majestic; but her face let, and profound sighs proceeded from her mouth. In was covered with a veil. She was inclined toward the rivu-

her hand she held a small rod with which she was tracing characters on the fine sand that lay between the turf and the brook. Zadig had the curiosity to examine what this woman was writing. He drew near; he saw the letter Z, then an A; he was astonished; then appeared a D; he started. But never was surprise equal to his when he saw the two last letters of his name.

He stood for some time immovable. At last, breaking silence with a faltering voice: "O generous lady! pardon a stranger, an unfortunate man, for presuming to ask thee by what surprising adventure I here find the name of Zadig traced out by thy divine hand!"

At this voice, and these words, the lady lifted up the veil with a trembling hand, looked at Zadig, sent forth a cry of tenderness, surprise and joy, and sinking under the various emotions which at once assaulted her soul, fell speechless into his arms. It was Astarte herself; it was the Queen of Babylon; it was she whom Zadig adored, and whom he had reproached himself for adoring; it was she whose misfortunes he had so deeply lamented, and for whose fate he had been so anxiously concerned.

He was for a moment deprived of the use of his senses, when he had fixed his eyes on those of Astarte, which now began to open again with a languor mixed with confusion and tenderness: "O ye immortal powers!" cried he, "who preside over the fates of weak mortals, do ye indeed restore Astarte to me! at what a time, in what a place, and in what a condition do I again behold her!" He fell on his knees before Astarte, and laid his face in the dust at her feet. The Queen of Babylon raised him up, and made him sit by her side on the brink of the rivulet. She frequently wiped her eyes, from which the tears continued to flow afresh. She twenty times resumed her discourse, which her sighs as often interrupted; she asked by what strange accident they were brought together, and suddenly prevented his answers by other questions; she waived the account of her own misfortunes, and desired to be informed of those of Zadig.

At last, both of them having a little composed the tumult of their souls, Zadig acquainted her in a few words by what adventure he was brought into that meadow. "But, O unhappy and respectable queen! by what means do I find thee in this lonely place, clothed in the habit of a slave, and accompanied by other female slaves, who are searching for a basilisk, which, by order of the physician, is to be stewed in rose water?"

"While they are searching for their basilisk," said the fair Astarte, "I will inform thee of all I have suffered, for which Heaven has sufficiently recompensed me by restoring thee to my sight. Thou knowest that the king, my husband, was vexed to see thee the most amiable of mankind; and that for this reason he one night resolved to strangle thee and poison me. Thou knowest how Heaven permitted my little mute to inform me of the orders of his sublime majesty. Hardly had the faithful Cador advised thee to depart, in obedience to my command, when he ventured to enter my apartment at midnight by a secret passage. He carried me off and conducted me to the temple of Oromazes, where the magi his brother shut me up in that huge statue whose base reaches to the foundation of the temple and whose top rises to the summit of the dome. I was there buried in a manner; but was saved by the magi; and supplied with all the necessaries of life. At break of day his majesty's apothecary entered my chamber with a potion composed of a mixture of henbane, opium, hemlock, black hellebore, and aconite; and another officer went to thine with a bowstring of blue silk. Neither of us was to be found. Cador, the better to deceive the king, pretended to come and accuse us both. He said that thou hadst taken the road to the Indies, and I that to Memphis, on which the king's guards were immediately dispatched in pursuit of us both.

"The couriers who pursued me did not know me. I had hardly ever shown my face to any but thee, and to thee only in the presence and by the order of my husband. They conducted themselves in the pursuit by the descrip-

tion that had been given them of my person. On the frontiers of Egypt they met with a woman of the same stature with me, and possessed perhaps of greater charms. She was weeping and wandering. They made no doubt but that this woman was the Queen of Babylon and accordingly brought her to Moabdar. Their mistake at first threw the king into a violent passion; but having viewed this woman more attentively, he found her extremely handsome and was comforted. She was called Missouf. I have since been informed that this name in the Egyptian language signifies the capricious fair one. She was so in reality; but she had as much cunning as caprice. She pleased Moabdar and gained such an ascendancy over him as to make him choose her for his wife. Her character then began to appear in its true colors. She gave herself up, without scruple, to all the freaks of a wanton imagination. She would have obliged the chief of the magi, who was old and gouty, to dance before her; and on his refusal, she persecuted him with the most unrelenting cruelty. She ordered her master of the horse to make her a pie of sweetmeats. In vain did he represent that he was not a pastry-cook; he was obliged to make it, and lost his place, because it was baked a little too hard. The post of master of the horse she gave to her dwarf, and that of chancellor to her page. In this manner did she govern Babylon. Everybody regretted the loss of me. The king, who till the moment of his resolving to poison me and strangle thee, had been a tolerably good kind of man, seemed now to have drowned all his virtues in his immoderate fondness for this capricious fair one. He came to the temple on the great day of the feast held in honor of the sacred fire. I saw him implore the gods in behalf of Missouf, at the feet of the statue in which I was inclosed. I raised my voice, I cried out, 'The gods reject the prayers of a king who is now become a tyrant, and who attempted to murder a reasonable wife, in order to marry a woman remarkable for nothing but her folly and extravagance.' At these words Moabdar was confounded

and his head became disordered. The oracle I had pronounced, and the tyranny of Missouf, conspired to deprive him of his judgment, and in a few days his reason entirely forsook him.

"Moabdar's madness, which seemed to be the judgment of Heaven, was the signal to a revolt. The people rose and ran to arms; and Babylon, which had been so long immersed in idleness and effeminacy, became the theater of a bloody civil war. I was taken from the heart of my statue and placed at the head of a party. Cador flew to Memphis to bring thee back to Babylon. The Prince of Hircania, informed of these fatal events, returned with his army and made a third party in Chaldea. He attacked the king, who fled before him with his capricious Egyptian. Moabdar died pierced with wounds. I myself had the misfortune to be taken by a party of Hircanians, who conducted me to their prince's tent, at the very moment that Missouf was brought before him. Thou wilt doubtless be pleased to hear that the prince thought me beautiful; but thou wilt be sorry to be informed that he designed me for his seraglio. He told me, with a blunt and resolute air, that as soon as he had finished a military expedition, which he was just going to undertake, he would come to me. Judge how great must have been my grief. My ties with Moabdar were already dissolved; I might have been the wife of Zadig; and I was fallen into the hands of a barbarian. I answered him with all the pride which my high rank and noble sentiment could inspire. I had always heard it affirmed that Heaven stamped on persons of my condition a mark of grandeur, which, with a single word or glance, could reduce to the lawliness of the most profound respect those rash and forward persons who presume to deviate from the rules of politeness. I spoke like a queen, but was treated like a maidservant. The Hircanian, without even deigning to speak to me, told his black eunuch that I was impertinent, but that he thought me handsome. He ordered him to take care of me, and to put me under the regimen of favorites, that so my

complexion being improved, I might be the more worthy of his favors when he should be at leisure to honor me with them. I told him that rather than submit to his desires I would put an end to my life. He replied, with a smile, that women, he believed, were not so bloodthirsty, and that he was accustomed to such violent expressions; and then left me with the air of a man who had just put another parrot into his aviary. What a state for the first queen of the universe, and, what is more, for a heart devoted to Zadig!"

At these words Zadig threw himself at her feet and bathed them with his tears. Astarte raised him with great tenderness and thus continued her story: "I now saw myself in the power of a barbarian and rival to the foolish woman with whom I was confined. She gave me an account of her adventures in Egypt. From the description she gave me of your person, from the time, from the dromedary on which you were mounted, and from every other circumstance, I inferred that Zadig was the man who had fought for her. I doubted not but that you were at Memphis, and, therefore, resolved to repair thither. Beautiful Missouf, said I, thou art more handsome than I, and will please the Prince of Hircania much better. Assist me in contriving the means of my escape; thou wilt then reign alone; thou wilt at once make me happy and rid thyself of a rival. Missouf concerted with me the means of my flight; and I departed secretly with a female Egyptian slave.

"As I approached the frontiers of Arabia, a famous robber, named Arbogad, seized me and sold me to some merchants, who brought me to this castle, where Lord Ogul resides. He bought me without knowing who I was. He is a voluptuary, ambitious of nothing but good living, and thinks that God sent him into the world for no other purpose than to sit at table. He is so extremely corpulent that he is always in danger of suffocation. His physician, who has but little credit with him when he has a good digestion, governs him with a despotic sway when he has ate too much. He has persuaded him that a basilisk

stewed in rose water will effect a complete cure. The Lord Ogul hath promised his hand to the female slave that brings him a basilisk. Thou seest that I leave them to vie with each other in meriting this honor; and never was I less desirous of finding the basilisk than since Heaven hath restored thee to my sight."

This account was succeeded by a long conversation between Astarte and Zadig, consisting of everything that their long-suppressed sentiments, their great sufferings, and their mutual love could inspire into hearts the most noble and tender; and the genii who preside over love carried their words to the sphere of Venus.

The women returned to Ogul without having found the basilisk. Zadig was introduced to this mighty lord and spoke to him in the following terms: "May immortal health descend from heaven to bless all thy days! I am a physician; at the first report of thy indisposition I flew to thy castle and have now brought thee a basilisk stewed in rose water. Not that I pretend to marry thee. All I ask is the liberty of a Babylonian slave, who hath been in thy possession for a few days; and, if I should not be so happy as to cure thee, magnificent Lord Ogul, I consent to remain a slave in her place."

The proposal was accepted. Astarte set out for Babylon with Zadig's servant, promising, immediately upon her arrival, to send a courier to inform him of all that had happened. Their parting was as tender as their meeting. The moment of meeting and that of parting are the two greatest epochs of life, as sayeth the great book of Zend. Zadig loved the queen with as much ardor as he professed; and the queen more than she thought proper to acknowledge.

Meanwhile Zadig spoke thus to Ogul: "My lord, my basilisk is not to be eaten; all its virtues must enter through thy pores. I have inclosed it in a little ball, blown up and covered with a fine skin. Thou must strike this ball with all thy might and I must strike it back for a considerable time; and by observing this regimen for a few days thou wilt see the effects of my art." The first day

Ogul was out of breath and thought he should have died with fatigue. The second he was less fatigued, slept better. In eight days he recovered all the strength, all the health, all the agility and cheerfulness of his most agreeable years.

"Thou hast played at ball, and thou hast been temperate," said Zadig; "know that there is no such thing in nature as a basilisk; that temperance and exercise are the two great preservatives of health; and that the art of reconciling intemperance and health is as chimerical as the philosopher's stone, judicial astrology, or the theology of the magi."

Ogul's first physician, observing how dangerous this man might prove to the medical art, formed a design, in conjunction with the apothecary, to send Zadig to search for a basilisk in the other world. Thus, having suffered such a long train of calamities on account of his good actions, he was now upon the point of losing his life for curing a gluttonous lord. He was invited to an excellent dinner and was to have been poisoned in the second course, but, during the first, he happily received a courier from the fair Astarte. "When one is beloved by a beautiful woman," says the great Zoroaster, "he hath always the good fortune to extricate himself out of every kind of difficulty and danger."

THE COMBATS

The queen was received at Babylon with all those transports of joy which are ever felt on the return of a beautiful princess who hath been involved in calamities. Babylon was now in greater tranquillity. The Prince of Hircania had been killed in battle. The victorious Babylonians declared that the queen should marry the man whom they should choose for their sovereign. They were resolved that the first place in the world, that of being husband to Astarte and King of Babylon, should not depend on cabals and intrigues. They swore to acknowledge for

king the man who, upon trial, should be found to be possessed of the greatest valor and the greatest wisdom. Accordingly, at the distance of a few leagues from the city, a spacious place was marked out for the list, surrounded with magnificent amphitheaters. Thither the combatants were to repair in complete armor. Each of them had a separate apartment behind the amphitheaters, where they were neither to be seen nor known by anyone. Each was to encounter four knights, and those that were so happy as to conquer four were then to engage with one another; so that he who remained the last master of the field would be proclaimed conqueror at the games.

Four days after he was to return with the same arms and to explain the enigmas proposed by the magi. If he did not explain the enigmas he was not king; and the running at the lances was to be begun afresh till a man would be found who was conqueror in both these combats; for they were absolutely determined to have a king possessed of the greatest wisdom and the most invincible courage. The queen was all the while to be strictly guarded: she was only allowed to be present at the games, and even there she was to be covered with a veil; but was not permitted to speak to any of the competitors, that so they might neither receive favor, nor suffer injustice.

These particulars Astarte communicated to her lover, hoping that in order to obtain her he would show himself possessed of greater courage and wisdom than any other person. Zadig set out on his journey, beseeching Venus to fortify his courage and enlighten his understanding. He arrived on the banks of the Euphrates on the eve of this great day. He caused his device to be inscribed among those of the combatants, concealing his face and his name, as the law ordained; and then went to repose himself in the apartment that fell to him by lot. His friend Cador, who, after the fruitless search he had made for him in Egypt, was now returned to Babylon, sent to his tent a complete suit of armor, which was a present from the queen; as also, from himself, one of the finest horses

in Persia. Zadig presently perceived that these presents were sent by Astarte; and from thence his courage derived fresh strength, and his love the most animating hopes.

Next day, the queen being seated under a canopy of jewels, and the amphitheaters filled with all the gentlemen and ladies of rank in Babylon, the combatants appeared in the circus. Each of them came and laid his device at the feet of the grand magi. They drew their devices by lot; and that of Zadig was the last. The first who advanced was a certain lord, named Itobad, very rich and very vain, but possessed of little courage, of less address, and hardly of any judgment at all. His servants had persuaded him that such a man as he ought to be king; he had said in reply, "Such a man as I ought to reign"; and thus they had armed him for a cap-a-pie. He wore an armor of gold enameled with green, a plume of green feathers, and a lance adorned with green ribbons. It was instantly perceived by the manner in which Itobad managed his horse, that it was not for such a man as he that Heaven reserved the scepter of Babylon. The first knight that ran against him threw him out of his saddle; the second laid him flat on his horse's buttocks, with his legs in the air, and his arms extended. Itobad recovered himself, but with so bad a grace that the whole amphitheater burst out a-laughing. The third knight disdained to make use of his lance; but, making a pass at him, took him by the right leg and, wheeling him half round, laid him prostrate on the sand. The squires of the game ran to him laughing, and replaced him in his saddle. The fourth combatant took him by the left leg, and tumbled him down on the other side. He was conducted back with scornful shouts to his tent, where, according to the law, he was to pass the night; and as he limped along with great difficulty he said, "What an adventure for such a man as I!"

The other knights acquitted themselves with greater ability and success. Some of them conquered two combatants; a few of them vanquished three; but none but Prince Otamus conquered four. At last Zadig fought him

in his turn. He successively threw four knights off their saddles with all the grace imaginable. It then remained to be seen who should be conqueror, Otamus or Zadig. The arms of the first were gold and blue, with a plume of the same color; those of the last were white. The wishes of all the spectators were divided between the knight in blue and the knight in white. The queen, whose heart was in a violent palpitation, offered prayers to Heaven for the success of the white color.

The two champions made their passes and vaults with so much agility, they mutually gave and received such dexterous blows with their lances, and sat so firmly in their saddles, that everybody but the queen wished there might be two kings in Babylon. At length, their horses being tired and their lances broken, Zadig had recourse to this stratagem: He passes behind the blue prince; springs upon the buttocks of his horse; seizes him by the middle; throws him on the earth; places himself in the saddle; and wheels around Otamus as he lay extended on the ground. All the amphitheater cried out, "Victory to the white knight!"

Otamus rises in a violent passion, and draws his sword; Zadig leaps from his horse with his saber in his hand. Both of them are now on the ground, engaged in a new combat, where strength and agility triumph by turns. The plumes of their helmets, the studs of their bracelets, the rings of their armor, are driven to a great distance by the violence of a thousand furious blows. They strike with the point and the edge; to the right, to the left, on the head, on the breast; they retreat; they advance; they measure swords; they close; they seize each other; they bend like serpents; they attack like lions; and the fire every moment flashes from their blows.

At last Zadig, having recovered his spirits, stops; makes a feint; leaps upon Otamus; throws him on the ground and disarms him; and Otamus cries out, "It is thou alone, O white knight, that oughtest to reign over Babylon!" The queen was now at the height of her joy. The knight

in blue armor and the knight in white were conducted each to his own apartment, as well as all the others, according to the intention of the law. Mutes came to wait upon them and to serve them at table. It may be easily supposed that the queen's little mute waited upon Zadig. They were then left to themselves to enjoy the sweets of repose till next morning, at which time the conqueror was to bring his device to the grand magi, to compare it with that which he had left, and make himself known.

Zadig, though deeply in love, was so much fatigued that he could not help sleeping. Itobad, who lay near him, never closed his eyes. He arose in the night, entered his apartment, took the white arms and the device of Zadig, and put his green armor in their place. At break of day he went boldly to the grand magi to declare that so great a man as he was conqueror. This was little expected; however, he was proclaimed while Zadig was still asleep. Astarte, surprised and filled with despair, returned to Babylon. The amphitheater was almost empty when Zadig awoke; he sought for his arms, but could find none but the green armor. With this he was obliged to cover himself, having nothing else near him. Astonished and enraged, he put it on in a furious passion, and advanced in this equipage.

The people that still remained in the amphitheater and the circus received him with hoots and hisses. They surrounded him and insulted him to his face. Never did man suffer such cruel mortifications. He lost his patience; with his saber he dispersed such of the populace as dared to affront him; but he knew not what course to take. He could not see the queen; he could not claim the white armor she had sent him without exposing her; and thus, while she was plunged in grief, he was filled with fury and distraction. He walked on the banks of the Euphrates, fully persuaded that his star had destined him to inevitable misery, and resolving in his own mind all his misfortunes, from the adventure of the woman who hated one-eyed men to that of his armor. "This," said he,

" is the consequence of my having slept too long. Had I slept less, I should now have been King of Babylon and in possession of Astarte. Knowledge, virtue, and courage have hitherto served only to make me miserable." He then let fall some secret murmurings against Providence, and was tempted to believe that the world was governed by a cruel destiny, which oppressed the good and prospered knights in green armor. One of his greatest mortifications was his being obliged to wear that green armor which had exposed him to such contumelious treatment. A merchant happening to pass by, he sold it to him for a trifle and bought a gown and a long bonnet. In this garb he proceeded along the banks of the Euphrates, filled with despair, and secretly accusing Providence, which thus continued to persecute him with unremitting severity.

THE HERMIT

WHILE he was thus sauntering he met a hermit, whose white and venerable beard hung down to his girdle. He held a book in his hand, which he read with great attention. Zadig stopped, and made him a profound obeisance. The hermit returned the compliment with such a noble and engaging air, that Zadig had the curiosity to enter into conversation with him. He asked him what book it was that he had been reading? " It is the Book of Destinies," said the hermit; " wouldst thou choose to look into it?" He put the book into the hands of Zadig, who, thoroughly versed as he was in several languages, could not decipher a single character of it. This only redoubled his curiosity.

" Thou seemest," said this good father, " to be in great distress."

" Alas," replied Zadig, " I have but too much reason."

" If thou wilt permit me to accompany thee," resumed the old man, " perhaps I may be of some service to thee. I have often poured the balm of consolation into the bleeding heart of the unhappy."

Zadig felt himself inspired with respect for the air, the beard, and the book of the hermit. He found, in the course of the conversation, that he was possessed of superior degrees of knowledge. The hermit talked of fate, of justice, of morals, of the chief good, of human weakness, and of virtue and vice, with such a spirited and moving eloquence, that Zadig felt himself drawn toward him by an irresistible charm. He earnestly entreated the favor of his company till their return to Babylon.

"I ask the same favor of thee," said the old man; "swear to me by Oromazes, that whatever I do, thou wilt not leave me for some days." Zadig swore, and they set out together.

In the evening the two travelers arrived in a superb castle. The hermit entreated a hospitable reception for himself and the young man who accompanied him. The porter, whom one might have easily mistaken for a great lord, introduced them with a kind of disdainful civility. He presented them to a principal domestic, who showed them his master's magnificent apartments. They were admitted to the lower end of the table, without being honored with the least mark of regard by the lord of the castle; but they were served, like the rest, with delicacy and profusion. They were then presented with water to wash their hands, in a golden basin adorned with emeralds and rubies. At last they were conducted to bed in a beautiful apartment; and in the morning a domestic brought each of them a piece of gold, after which they took their leave and departed.

"The master of the house," said Zadig, as they were proceeding on the journey, "appears to be a generous man, though somewhat too proud; he nobly performs the duties of hospitality." At that instant he observed that a kind of large pocket, which the hermit had, was filled and distended; and upon looking more narrowly he found that it contained the golden basin adorned with precious stones, which the hermit had stolen. He durst not take any notice of it, but he was filled with a strange surprise.

About noon, the hermit came to the door of a paltry

house inhabited by a rich miser, and begged the favor of an hospitable reception for a few hours. An old servant, in a tattered garb, received them with a blunt and rude air, and led them into the stable, where he gave them some rotten olives, moldy bread, and sour beer. The hermit ate and drank with as much seeming satisfaction as he had done the evening before; and then addressing himself to the old servant, who watched them both, to prevent their stealing anything, and rudely pressed them to depart, he gave him the two pieces of gold he had received in the morning, and thanked him for his great civility.

"Pray," added he, "allow me to speak to thy master." The servant, filled with astonishment, introduced the two travelers. "Magnificent lord," said the hermit, "I cannot but return thee my most humble thanks for the noble manner in which thou hast entertained us. Be pleased to accept this golden basin as a small mark of my gratitude." The miser started, and was ready to fall backward; but the hermit, without giving him time to recover from his surprise, instantly departed with his young fellow traveler.

"Father," said Zadig, "what is the meaning of all this? Thou seemest to me to be entirely different from other men; thou stealest a golden basin adorned with precious stones from a lord who received thee magnificently, and givest it to a miser who treats thee with indignity."

"Son," replied the old man, "this magnificent lord, who receives strangers only from vanity and ostentation, will hereby be rendered more wise; and the miser will learn to practice the duties of hospitality. Be surprised at nothing, but follow me."

Zadig knew not as yet whether he was in company with the most foolish or the most prudent of mankind; but the hermit spoke with such an ascendancy, that Zadig, who was moreover bound by his oath, could not refuse to follow him.

In the evening they arrived at a house built with equal elegance and simplicity, where nothing favored either of prodigality or avarice. The master of it was a philosopher, who had retired from the world, and who cultivated in

peace the study of virtue and wisdom, without any of that rigid and morose severity so commonly to be found in men of his character. He had chosen to build this country house, in which he received strangers with a generosity free from ostentation. He went himself to meet the two travelers, whom he led into a commodious apartment, where he desired them to repose themselves a little. Soon after he came and invited them to a decent and well-ordered repast during which he spoke with great judgment of the last revolutions in Babylon. He seemed to be strongly attached to the queen, and wished that Zadig had appeared in the lists to dispute the crown. "But the people," added he, "do not deserve to have such a king as Zadig."

Zadig blushed, and felt his griefs redoubled. They agreed, in the course of the conversation, that the things of this world did not always answer the wishes of the wise. The hermit still maintained that the ways of Providence were inscrutable; and that men were in the wrong to judge of a whole, of which they understood but the smallest part.

They talked of passions. "Ah," said Zadig, "how fatal are their effects!"

"They are in the winds," replied the hermit, "that swell the sails of the ship; it is true, they sometimes sink her, but without them she could not sail at all. The bile makes us sick and choleric; but without bile we could not live. Everything in this world is dangerous, and yet everything is necessary."

The conversation turned on pleasure; and the hermit proved that it was a present bestowed by the deity. "For," said he, "man cannot give himself either sensations or ideas; he receives all; and pain and pleasure proceed from a foreign cause as well as his being."

Zadig was surprised to see a man, who had been guilty of such extravagant actions, capable of reasoning with so much judgment and propriety. At last, after a conversation equally entertaining and instructive, the host led back his two guests to their apartment, blessing Heaven for having sent him two men possessed of so much wisdom and

virtue. He offered them money with such an easy and noble air as could not possibly give any offense. The hermit refused it, and said that he must now take his leave of him, as he set out for Babylon before it was light. Their parting was tender; Zadig especially felt himself filled with esteem and affection for a man of such an amiable character.

When he and the hermit were alone in their apartment, they spent a long time in praising their host. At break of day the old man awakened his companion. "We must now depart," said he, "but while all the family are still asleep, I will leave this man a mark of my esteem and affection." So saying, he took a candle and set fire to the house.

Zadig, struck with horror, cried aloud, and endeavored to hinder him from committing such a barbarous action; but the hermit drew him away by a superior force, and the house was soon in flames. The hermit, who, with his companion, was already at a considerable distance, looked back to the conflagration with great tranquillity.

"Thanks be to God," said he, "the house of my dear host is entirely destroyed! Happy man!"

At these words Zadig was at once tempted to burst out a-laughing, to reproach the reverend father, to beat him, and to run away. But he did none of all of these, for still subdued by the powerful ascendancy of the hermit, he followed him, in spite of himself, to the next stage.

This was at the house of a charitable and virtuous widow, who had a nephew fourteen years of age, a handsome and promising youth, and her only hope. She performed the honors of her house as well as she could. Next day, she ordered her nephew to accompany the strangers to a bridge, which being lately broken down, was become extremely dangerous in passing. The young man walked before them with great alacrity. As they were crossing the bridge, "Come," said the hermit to the youth, "I must show my gratitude to thy aunt." He then took him by the hair and plunged him into the river. The boy sunk, appeared again on the surface of the water, and was swallowed up by the current.

"O monster! O thou most wicked of mankind!" cried Zadig.

"Thou promisedst to behave with greater patience," said the hermit, interrupting him. "Know that under the ruins of that house which Providence hath set on fire the master hath found an immense treasure. Know that this young man, whose life Providence hath shortened, would have assassinated his aunt in the space of a year, and thee in that of two."

"Who told thee so, barbarian?" cried Zadig; "and though thou hadst read this event in thy Book of Destinies, art thou permitted to drown a youth who never did thee any harm?"

While the Babylonian was thus exclaiming, he observed that the old man had no longer a beard, and that his countenance assumed the features and complexion of youth. The hermit's habit disappeared, and four beautiful wings covered a majestic body resplendent with light.

"O sent of heaven! O divine angel!" cried Zadig, humbly prostrating himself on the ground, "hast thou then descended from the Empyrean to teach a weak mortal to submit to the eternal decrees of Providence?"

"Men," said the angel Jesrad, "judge of all without knowing anything; and, of all men, thou best deservest to be enlightened."

Zadig begged to be permitted to speak. "I distrust myself," said he, "but may I presume to ask the favor of thee to clear up one doubt that still remains in my mind? Would it not have been better to have corrected this youth, and made him virtuous, than to have drowned him?"

"Had he been virtuous," replied Jesrad, "and enjoyed a longer life, it would have been his fate to be assassinated himself, together with the wife he would have married, and the child he would have had by her."

"But why," said Zadig, "is it necessary that there should be crimes and misfortunes, and that these misfortunes should fall on the good?"

"The wicked," replied Jesrad, "are always unhappy;

they serve to prove and try the small number of the just that are scattered through the earth; and there is no evil that is not productive of some good."

"But," said Zadig, "suppose there were nothing but good and no evil at all."

"Then," replied Jesrad, "this earth would be another earth. The chain of events would be ranged in another order and directed by wisdom; but this other order, which would be perfect, can exist only in the eternal abode of the Supreme Being, to which no evil can approach. The Deity hath created millions of worlds, among which there is not one that resembles another. This immense variety is the effect of His immense power. There are not two leaves among the trees of the earth, nor two globes in the unlimited expanse of heaven that are exactly similar; and all that thou seest on the little atom in which thou art born, ought to be in its proper time and place, according to the immutable decree of Him who comprehends all. Men think that this child who hath just perished is fallen into the water by chance; and that it is by the same chance that this house is burned; but there is no such thing as chance; all is either a trial, or a punishment, or a reward, or a foresight. Remember the fisherman who thought himself the most wretched of mankind. Oromazes sent thee to change his fate. Cease, then, frail mortal, to dispute against what thou oughtest to adore."

"But," said Zadig—as he pronounced the word "But," the angel took his flight toward the tenth sphere. Zadig on his knees adored Providence, and submitted. The angel cried to him from on high, "Direct thy course toward Babylon."

THE ENIGMAS

ZADIG, entranced, as it were, and like a man about whose head the thunder had burst, walked at random. He entered Babylon on the very day when those who had fought at the tournaments were assembled in the grand vestibule of the palace to explain the enigmas and to answer the

questions of the grand magi. All the knights were already arrived, except the knight in green armor. As soon as Zadig appeared in the city the people crowded round him; every eye was fixed on him; every mouth blessed him, and every heart wished him the empire. The envious man saw him pass; he frowned and turned aside. The people conducted him to the place where the assembly was held. The queen, who was informed of his arrival, became a prey to the most violent agitations of hope and fear. She was filled with anxiety and apprehension. She could not comprehend why Zadig was without arms, nor why Itobad wore the white armor. A confused murmur arose at the sight of Zadig. They were equally surprised and charmed to see him; but none but the knights who had fought were permitted to appear in the assembly.

"I have fought as well as the other knights," said Zadig, "but another here wears my arms; and while I wait for the honor of proving the truth of my assertion, I demand the liberty of presenting myself to explain the enigmas." The question was put to the vote, and his reputation for probity was still so deeply impressed in their minds, that they admitted him without scruple.

The first question proposed by the grand magi was: "What, of all things in the world, is the longest and the shortest, the swiftest and the slowest, the most divisible and the most extended, the most neglected and the most regretted, without which nothing can be done, which devours all that is little, and enlivens all that is great?"

Itobad was to speak. He replied that so great a man as he did not understand enigmas, and that it was sufficient for him to have conquered by his strength and valor. Some said that the meaning of the enigmas was Fortune; some, the Earth; and others the Light. Zadig said that it was Time. "Nothing," added he, "is longer, since it is the measure of eternity; nothing is shorter, since it is insufficient for the accomplishment of our projects; nothing more slow to him that expects, nothing more rapid to him that enjoys; in greatness, it extends to infinity; in smallness,

it is infinitely divisible; all men neglect it; all regret the loss of it; nothing can be done without it; it consigns to oblivion whatever is unworthy of being transmitted to posterity, and it immortalizes such actions as are truly great." The assembly acknowledged that Zadig was in the right.

The next question was: "What is the thing which we receive without thanks, which we enjoy without knowing how, which we give to others when we know not where we are, and which we lose without perceiving it?"

Everyone gave his own explanation. Zadig alone guessed that it was Life, and explained all the other enigmas with the same facility. Itobad always said that nothing was more easy, and that he could have answered them with the same readiness had he chosen to have given himself the trouble. Questions were then proposed on justice, on the sovereign good, and on the art of government. Zadig's answers were judged to be the most solid. "What a pity is it," said they, "that such a great genius should be so bad a knight!"

"Illustrious lords," said Zadig, "I have had the honor of conquering in the tournaments. It is to me that the white armor belongs. Lord Itobad took possession of it during my sleep. He probably thought that it would fit him better than the green. I am now ready to prove in your presence, with my gown and sword, against all that beautiful white armor which he took from me, that it is I who have had the honor of conquering the brave Otamus."

Itobad accepted the challenge with the greatest confidence. He never doubted but what, armed as he was, with a helmet, a cuirass, and brassarts, he would obtain an easy victory over a champion in a cap and nightgown. Zadig drew his sword, saluting the queen, who looked at him with a mixture of fear and joy. Itobad drew his without saluting anyone. He rushed upon Zadig, like a man who had nothing to fear; he was ready to cleave him in two. Zadig knew how to ward off his blows, by opposing the strongest part of his sword to the weakest of that of his adversary, in such a manner that Itobad's sword was

broken. Upon which Zadig, seizing his enemy by the waist, threw him on the ground; and fixing the point of his sword at the breastplate, "Suffer thyself to be disarmed," said he, "or thou art a dead man."

Itobad, always surprised at the disgraces that happened to such a man as he, was obliged to yield to Zadig, who took from him with great composure his magnificent helmet, his superb cuirass, his fine brassarts, his shining cuishes; clothed himself with them, and in this dress ran to throw himself at the feet of Astarte. Cador easily proved that the armor belonged to Zadig. He was acknowledged king by the unanimous consent of the whole nation, and especially by that of Astarte, who, after so many calamities, now tasted the exquisite pleasure of seeing her lover worthy, in the eyes of all the world, to be her husband. Itobad went home to be called lord in his own house. Zadig was king, and was happy. The queen and Zadig adored Providence. He sent in search of the robber Arbogad, to whom he gave an honorable post in his army, promising to advance him to the first dignities if he behaved like a true warrior, and threatening to hang him if he followed the profession of a robber.

Setoc, with the fair Almona, was called from the heart of Arabia and placed at the head of the commerce of Babylon. Cador was preferred and distinguished according to his great services. He was the friend of the king; and the king was then the only monarch on earth that had a friend. The little mute was not forgotten.

But neither could the beautiful Semira be comforted for having believed that Zadig would be blind of an eye; nor did Azora cease to lament her having attempted to cut off his nose. Their griefs, however, he softened by his presents. The envious man died of rage and shame. The empire enjoyed peace, glory, and plenty. This was the happiest age of the earth; it was governed by love and justice. The people blessed Zadig, and Zadig blessed Heaven.

It would have been strange if the most widely-read story teller of modern times had neglected to furnish an example of his art in the "detective" form. It is in one of Dumas' best—"Le Vicompte de Bragelonne"—that D'Artagnan enters upon the scene with Raoul, son of his old fellow-musketeer Athos, and soon plunges into a fascinating search for the unknown, exhibiting flashes of deduction as quick and brilliant as ever were the sparks and glitter of his trenchant sword-play.

Alexandre Dumas

D'Artagnan, Detective

I

THE KING

THE first moment of surprise over, D'Artagnan perused Athos's note. "It is strange," said he, "that the king should send for me."

"Why so?" said Raoul; "do you not think, monsieur, that the king must regret such a servant as you?"

"Oh, oh!" cried the officer, laughing with all his might; "you are jeering at me, Master Raoul. If the king had regretted me, he would not have let me leave him. No, no; I see in it something better, or worse, if you like."

"Worse! What can that be, Monsieur le Chevalier?"

"You are young, you are a boy, you are admirable. Oh, how I should like to be as you are! To be but twenty-four, with an unfurrowed brow, under which the brain is void of everything but woman, love, and good intentions. Oh, Raoul, as long as you have not received the smiles of kings, the confidence of queens; as long as you have not had two cardinals killed under you, the one a tiger, the other a fox; as long as you have not—— But what is the good of all this trifling? We must part, Raoul."

"How you speak that! What a serious face!"

"Eh! but the occasion is worthy of it. Listen to me; I have a very good recommendation to make you."

"I am all attention, Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"You will go and inform your father of my departure."

"Your departure?"

"*Pardieu!* You will tell him that I am gone into England; and that I am living in my little country house."

"In England, you! And the king's orders?"

"You get more and more silly; do you imagine that I am going in that way to the Louvre, to place myself at the disposal of that little crowned wolf-cub?"

"The king a wolf-cub? Why, Monsieur le Chevalier, you are mad!"

"On the contrary, I was never so much otherwise. You do not know what he wants to do with me, this worthy son of *Louis le Juste!* But, *Mordioux!* that is policy. He wishes to ensconce me snugly in the Bastile—purely and simply, see you!"

"What for?" cried Raoul, terrified at what he heard.

"On account of what I told him one day at Blois. I was warm; he remembers it."

"You told him what?"

"That he was mean, cowardly, and silly."

"Good God!" cried Raoul, "is it possible that such words should have issued from your mouth?"

"Perhaps I don't give the letter of my speech, but I give the sense of it."

"But did not the king have you arrested immediately?"

"By whom? It was I who commanded the musketeers; he must have commanded me to convey myself to prison; I would never have consented; I would have resisted myself. And then I went into England—no more D'Artagnan. Now, the cardinal is dead, or nearly so, they learn that I am in Paris, and they lay their hands on me."

"The cardinal was, then, your protector?"

"The cardinal knew me; he knew certain particularities of me; I also knew certain of him; we appreciated each other mutually. And then, on rendering his soul to the devil, he would recommend Anne of Austria to make me the inhabitant of a safe place. Go then and find your father, relate the fact to him—and, adieu!"

"My dear Monsieur d'Artagnan," said Raoul, very much

agitated, after having looked out at the window, "you can not even fly!"

"Why not?"

"Because there is below an officer of the Swiss guards waiting for you."

"Well!"

"Well, he will arrest you."

D'Artagnan broke into a Homeric laugh.

"Oh! I know very well that you will resist, that you will fight even; I know very well that you will prove conqueror; but that amounts to rebellion, and you are an officer yourself, knowing what discipline is."

"Devil of a boy, how noble, how logical that is!" grumbled D'Artagnan.

"You approve of it, do you not?"

"Yes, instead of passing into the street, where the oaf is waiting for me, I will slip quietly out at the back. I have a horse in the stable, and a good one. I will burst him, my means permit me to do so, and by killing one horse after another, I shall arrive at Boulogne in eleven hours; I know the road. Only tell your father one thing."

"What is that?"

"That is that that which he knows about is placed at Planchet's house, except a fifth, and that——"

"But, my dear Monsieur d'Artagnan, be assured that if you fly, two things will be said of you."

"What are they, my dear friend?"

"The first, that you have been afraid."

"Ah! and who will dare to say that?"

"The king, the first."

"Well! but he will tell the truth—I am afraid."

"The second, that you felt yourself guilty."

"Guilty of what?"

"Why, of the crimes they wish to impute to you."

"That is true again. So, then, you advise me to go and get myself made a prisoner in the Bastile?"

"Monsieur le Comte de la Fère would advise you just as I do."

"*Pardieu!* I know he would," said D'Artagnan thoughtfully. "You are right, I shall not escape. But if they cast me into the Bastile?"

"We will get you out again," said Raoul, with a quiet, calm air.

"*Mordioux!* You said that after a brave fashion, Raoul," said D'Artagnan, seizing his hand; "that savors of Athos, quite pure. Well, I will go, then. Do not forget my last word."

"Except a fifth," said Raoul.

"Yes, you are a fine boy; and I wish you to add one thing to that last word."

"Speak, chevalier."

"It is that if you cannot get me out of the Bastile, and that I remain there—— Oh! that will be so, and I shall be a detestable prisoner; I, who have been a passable man—in that case, I give three-fifths to you, and the fourth to your father."

"Chevalier!"

"*Mordioux!* If you will have some masses said for me, you are welcome."

That being said, D'Artagnan took his belt from the hook, girded on his sword, took a hat, the feather of which was fresh, and held his hand out to Raoul, who threw himself into his arms. When in the shop, he cast a quick glance at the shoplads, who looked upon the scene with a pride mingled with some inquietude; then plunging his hands into a chest of currants, he went straight to the officer who was waiting for him at the door.

"Those features! Can it be you, Monsieur de Friedisch?" cried D'Artagnan gayly. "Eh! eh! what, do we arrest our friends?"

"Arrest!" whispered the lads among themselves.

"Yes, it is I, Monsieur d'Artagnan! Good-day to you!" said the Swiss, in his mountain *patois*.

"Must I give you my sword? I warn you, that it is long and heavy; you had better let me wear it to the Louvre; I feel quite lost in the streets without a sword,

and you would be more at a loss than I should with two."

"The king has given no orders about it," replied the Swiss; "so keep your sword."

"Well, that is very polite on the part of the king. Let us go at once."

M. Friedisch was not a talker, and D'Artagnan had too much to think about to be one. From Planchet's shop to the Louvre was not far; they arrived in ten minutes. It was a dark night. M. de Friedisch wanted to enter by the wicket. "No," said D'Artagnan, "you would lose time by that; take the little staircase."

The Swiss did as D'Artagnan advised, and conducted him to the vestibule of the king's cabinet. When arrived there, he bowed to his prisoner, and, without saying anything, returned to his post. D'Artagnan had not had time to ask why his sword was not taken from him, when the door of the cabinet opened, and a *valet de chambre* called, "Monsieur d'Artagnan!" The musketeer assumed his parade carriage, and entered, with his large eyes wide open, his brow calm, his mustache stiff. The king was seated at a table writing. He did not disturb himself when the step of the musketeer resounded on the floor; he did not even turn his head. D'Artagnan advanced as far as the middle of the room, and seeing that the king paid no attention to him, and suspecting, besides, that that was nothing but affectation, a sort of tormenting preamble to the explanation which was preparing, he turned his back on the prince, and began to examine the frescoes on the cornices and the cracks in the ceiling. This maneuver was accompanied by this little tacit monologue: "Ah! you want to humble me, do you?—you, whom I have seen so young—you, whom I have saved as I would my own child—you, whom I have served as I would a God—that is to say, for nothing. Wait awhile! wait awhile! you shall see what a man can do who has snuffed the air of the fire of the Huguenots, under the beard of Monsieur le Cardinal—the true cardinal." At this moment Louis turned round.

"Ah! are you there, Monsieur d'Artagnan?" said he.

D'Artagnan saw the movement and imitated it. "Yes, sire," said he.

"Very well; have the goodness to wait till I have cast this up."

D'Artagnan made no reply; he only bowed. "That is polite enough," thought he; "I have nothing to say."

Louis made a violent dash with his pen, and threw it angrily away.

"Ah! go on, work yourself up!" thought the musketeer; "you will put me at my ease, you shall find I did not empty the bag, the other day, at Blois."

Louis rose from his seat, passed his hand over his brow; then, stopping opposite to D'Artagnan, he looked at him with an air at once imperious and kind. "What the devil does he want with me? I wish he would begin!" thought the musketeer.

"Monsieur," said the king, "you know, without doubt, that Monsieur le Cardinal is dead?"

"I suspected so, sire."

"You know that, consequently, I am master in my own kingdom?"

"That is not a thing that dates from the death of Monsieur le Cardinal, sire; a man is always master in his own house, when he wishes to be so."

"Yes; but do you remember all you said to me at Blois?"

"Now we come to it," thought D'Artagnan; "I was not deceived. Well, so much the better; it is a sign that my scent is tolerably keen yet."

"You do not answer me," said Louis.

"Sire, I think I recollect."

"You only think?"

"It is so long ago."

"If you do not remember, I do. You said to me—listen with attention."

"Ah! I shall listen with all my ears, sire; for it is very likely the conversation will turn in a fashion very interesting to me."

Louis once more looked at the musketeer. The latter smoothed the feather of his hat, then his mustache, and waited intrepidly. Louis XIV continued: "You quitted my service, monsieur, after having told me the whole truth?"

"Yes, sire."

"That is, after having declared to me all you thought to be true with regard to my mode of thinking and acting. That is always a merit. You began by telling me that you had served my family thirty years, and were tired."

"I said so; yes, sire."

"And you afterward admitted that that fatigue was a pretext, and that discontent was the real cause."

"I was discontented, in fact; but that discontent has never betrayed itself, that I know of, and if, like a man of heart, I have spoken out before your majesty, I have not even thought of the matter in face of anybody else."

"Do not excuse yourself, D'Artagnan, but continue to listen to me. When making me the reproach that you were discontented, you received in reply a promise; wait, is not that true?"

"Yes, sire, as true as what I told you."

"You answered me, 'Hereafter? No, now, immediately.' Do not excuse yourself, I tell you. It was natural, but you had no charity for your poor prince, Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"Sire, charity for a king, on the part of a poor soldier!"

"You understand me very well; you knew that I stood in need of it; you knew very well that I was not master; you knew very well that my hope was in the future. Now, you replied to me when I spoke of that future, 'My discharge—and that directly.'"

"That is true," murmured D'Artagnan, biting his mustache.

"You did not flatter me when I was in distress," added Louis.

"But," said D'Artagnan, raising his head nobly, "if I did not flatter your majesty when poor, neither did I betray you. I have shed my blood for nothing; I have watched like a dog at a door, knowing full well that neither bread nor

bone would be thrown to me. I, although poor likewise, asked nothing of your majesty but the discharge you speak of."

"I know you are a brave man, but I was a young man, and you ought to have had some indulgence for me. What had you to reproach the king with? that he left King Charles II without assistance? let us say further—that he did not marry Mademoiselle de Mancini?" When saying these words the king fixed upon the musketeer a searching look.

"Ah! ah!" thought the latter, "he is doing more than remembering, he is guessing. The devil!"

"Your sentence," continued Louis, "fell upon the king and fell upon the man. But, Monsieur d'Artagnan, that weakness, for you considered it a weakness?"—D'Artagnan made no reply—"you reproached me also with regard to monsieur, the defunct cardinal. Now, Monsieur le Cardinal, did he not bring me up, did he not support me—elevating himself and supporting himself at the same time, I admit; but the benefit was discharged. As an ingrate or an egotist, would, you, then, have better loved me or served me?"

"Sire!"

"We will say no more about it, monsieur; it would only create you too many regrets and me too much pain."

D'Artagnan was not convinced. The young king, in adopting a tone of hauteur with him, did not forward his purpose.

"You have since reflected?" resumed Louis.

"Upon what, sire?" asked D'Artagnan politely.

"Why, upon all that I have said to you, monsieur."

"Yes, sire, no doubt——"

"And you have only waited for an opportunity of retracting your words?"

"Sire!"

"You hesitate, it seems."

"I do not understand what your majesty did me the honor to say to me."

Louis' brow became cloudy.

"Have the goodness to excuse me, sire; my understand-

ing is particularly thick; things do not penetrate it without difficulty; but it is true, when once they get in, they remain there."

"Yes, yes; you appear to have a memory."

"Almost as good a one as your majesty's."

"Then give me quickly one solution. My time is valuable. What have you been doing since your discharge?"

"Making my fortune, sire."

"The expression is rude, Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"Your majesty takes it in bad part, certainly. I entertain nothing but the profoundest respect for the king; and if I have been impolite, which might be excused by my long sojourn in camps and barracks, your majesty is too much above me to be offended at a word innocently escaped from a soldier."

"In fact, I know that you have performed a brilliant action in England, monsieur. I only regret that you have broken your promise."

"I!" cried D'Artagnan.

"Doubtless. You engaged your word not to serve any other prince on quitting my services. Now, it was for King Charles II that you undertook the marvelous carrying off of Monsieur Monk."

"Pardon me, sire; it was for myself."

"And did you succeed?"

"Like the captains of the fifteenth century, *coups de main* and adventures."

"What do you call succeeding—a fortune?"

"A hundred thousand crowns, sire, which I possess—that is, in one week the triple of all I ever had in money in fifty years."

"It is a handsome sum. But you are ambitious, I believe?"

"I, sire? The quarter of it would be a treasure; and I swear to you I have no thought of augmenting it."

"What! do you contemplate remaining idle?"

"Yes, sire."

"To quit the sword?"

"That is done."

"Impossible, Monsieur d'Artagnan!" said Louis firmly.

"But, sire——"

"Well?"

"What for?"

"Because I will that you shall not!" said the young prince, in a voice so stern and imperious that D'Artagnan evinced surprise and even uneasiness.

"Will your majesty allow me one word of reply?" said he.

"Speak."

"I formed that resolution when I was poor and destitute."

"So be it. Go on."

"Now, when, by my industry, I have acquired a comfortable means of subsistence, would your majesty despoil me of my liberty? Your majesty would condemn me to the least, when I have gained the most."

"Who gave you permission, monsieur, to fathom my designs, or to reckon with me?" replied Louis, in a voice almost angry; "who told you what I shall do or what you will yourself do?"

"Sire," said the musketeer quietly, "as far as I see, freedom is not the order of the conversation, as it was on the day we came to an explanation at Blois."

"No, monsieur; everything is changed."

"I make your majesty my sincere compliments upon that, but——"

"But you don't believe it?"

"I am not a great statesman, and yet I have my eye upon affairs; it seldom fails; now, I do not see exactly as your majesty does, sire. The reign of Mazarin is over, but that of the financiers is begun. They have the money; your majesty will not often see much of it. To live under the paw of these hungry wolves is hard for a man who reckoned upon independence."

At this moment someone scratched at the door of the cabinet; the king raised his head proudly. "Your pardon, Monsieur d'Artagnan," said he; "it is Monsieur Colbert,

who comes to make me a report. Come in, Monsieur Colbert."

D'Artagnan drew back. Colbert entered with papers in his hand, and went up to the king. There can be little doubt that the Gascon did not lose the opportunity of applying his keen, quick glance to the new figure which presented itself.

"Is the inquiry then made?"

"Yes, sire."

"And the opinion of the inquisitors?"

"Is that the accused merit confiscation and death."

"Ah! ah!" said the king, without changing countenance, and casting an oblique look at D'Artagnan. "And your own opinion, Monsieur Colbert?" said he.

Colbert looked at D'Artagnan in his turn. That imposing countenance checked the words upon his lips. Louis perceived this. "Do not disturb yourself," said he; "it is Monsieur d'Artagnan; do you not know Monsieur d'Artagnan again?"

These two men looked at each other—D'Artagnan, with his eye open and bright; Colbert, with his eye half closed and dim. The frank intrepidity of the one displeased the other; the cautious circumspection of the financier displeased the soldier. "Ah! ah! this is the gentleman who made that brilliant stroke in England," said Colbert. And he bowed slightly to D'Artagnan.

"Ah! ah!" said the Gascon, "this is the gentleman who clipped off the lace from the uniform of the Swiss! A praiseworthy piece of economy."

The financier thought to embarrass the musketeer; but the musketeer ran the financier right through.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," resumed the king, who had not remarked all the shades of which Mazarin would not have missed one, "this concerns the farmers of the revenue who have robbed me, whom I am hanging, and whose death-warrants I am about to sign."

"Oh! oh!" said D'Artagnan, starting.

"What did you say?"

"Oh! nothing, sire. This is no business of mine."

The king had already taken up the pen, and was applying it to the paper. "Sire," said Colbert, in a subdued voice, "I beg to warn your majesty that if an example be necessary that example may find some difficulty in the execution."

"What do you say?" said Louis.

"You must not conceal from yourself," continued Colbert quietly, "that attacking the farmers-general is attacking the *surintendance*. The two unfortunate guilty men in question are the particular friends of a powerful personage, and the day of punishment, which otherwise might be stifled in the Châtelet, disturbances will arise without doubt."

Louis colored and turned toward D'Artagnan, who took a slight bite at his mustache, not without a smile of pity for the financier, as likewise for the king who had to listen to him so long. But Louis seized the pen, and with a movement so rapid that his hand shook, he affixed his signature at the bottom of the two papers presented by Colbert, then looking the latter in the face, "Monsieur Colbert," said he, "when you speak to me of affairs, exclude more frequently the word difficulty from your reasonings and opinions; as to the word impossibility, never pronounce it."

Colbert bowed, much humiliated at having undergone such a lesson before the musketeer. He was about to go out, but, jealous to repair his check, "I forgot to announce to your majesty," said he, "that the confiscations amount to the sum of five millions of livres."

"That's pretty!" thought D'Artagnan.

"Which makes in my coffers?" said the king.

"Eighteen millions of livres, sire," replied Colbert, bowing.

"*Mordioux!*" grumbled D'Artagnan, "that's glorious!"

"Monsieur Colbert," added the king, "you will, if you please, go through the gallery where Monsieur Lyonne is waiting, and tell him to bring hither what he has drawn up—by my order."

"Directly, sire; if your majesty wants me no more this evening."

"No, monsieur; adieu!" And Colbert went out.

"Now, let us return to our affair, Monsieur d'Artagnan," said the king, as if nothing had happened. "You see that, with respect to money, there is already a notable change?"

"Something like from zero to eighteen millions," replied the musketeer gayly. "Ah! that was what your majesty wanted the day King Charles II came to Blois. The two states would not have been imbroiled to-day; for I must say, that there also I see another stumbling-block."

"Well, in the first place," replied Louis, "you are unjust, monsieur; for if Providence had made me able to give my brother the million that day, you would not have quitted my service, and, consequently, you would not have made your fortune, as you told me just now you have done. But, in addition to this, I have had another piece of good fortune; and my difference with Great Britain need not alarm you."

A *valet de chambre* interrupted the king by announcing M. Lyonne. "Come in, monsieur," said the king; "you are punctual; that is like a good servant. Let us see your letter to my brother Charles II."

D'Artagnan pricked up his ears. "A moment, monsieur," said Louis carelessly to the Gascon; "I must expedite to London my consent to the marriage of my brother, Monsieur le Duc d'Anjou, with the Princess Henrietta Stuart."

"He is knocking me about, it seems," murmured D'Artagnan, while the king signed the letter, and dismissed M. de Lyonne; "but, *ma foi!* the more he knocks me about in this manner, the better I shall be pleased."

The king followed M. de Lyonne with his eye, till the door was closed behind him; he even made three steps, as if he would follow the minister; but, after these three steps, stopping, pausing, and coming back to the musketeer, "Now, monsieur," said he, "let us hasten to terminate our affair. You told me the other day, at Blois, that you were not rich?"

"But I am now, sire."

"Yes; but that does not concern me; you have your own money, not mine; that does not enter into my account."

"I do not well understand what your majesty means."

"Then, instead of leaving you to draw out our words, speak spontaneously. Should you be satisfied with twenty thousand livres a year as a fixed income?"

"But, sire," said D'Artagnan, opening his eyes to the utmost.

"Would you be satisfied with four horses furnished and kept, and with a supplement of funds such as you should require, according to occasions and needs, or would you prefer a fixed sum which would be, for example, forty thousand livres? Answer."

"Sire, your majesty——"

"Yes, you are surprised; that is natural, and I expected it. Answer me, come! or I shall think you have no longer that rapidity of judgment I have so much admired in you."

"It is certain, sire, that twenty thousand livres a year make a handsome sum; but——"

"No buts! Yes or no! is it an honorable indemnity?"

"Oh! certes——"

"You will be satisfied with it? Well, that is well. It will be better to reckon the extra expenses separately; you can arrange that with Colbert. Now, let us pass to something more important."

"But, sire, I told your majesty——"

"That you wanted rest, I know you did; only I replied that I would not allow it—I am master, I suppose?"

"Yes, sire."

"That is well. You were formerly in the way of becoming captain of the musketeers?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well, here is your commission signed. I placed it in this drawer. The day on which you shall return from a certain expedition which I have to confide to you, on that day you may yourself take the commission from the drawer." D'Artagnan still hesitated, and hung down his head. "Come, monsieur," said the king, "one would believe, to look at you, that you did not know that at the court of the most

Christian king, the captain general of the musketeers takes precedence of the maréchals of France."

"Sire, I know he does."

"Then I must fancy you do not put faith in my word?"

"Oh! sire, never—never dream of such a thing."

"I have wished to prove to you that you, so good a servant, had lost a good master; am I anything like the master that will suit you?"

"I begin to think you are, sire."

"Then, monsieur, you will resume your functions. Your company is quite disorganized since your departure, and the men go about drinking and rioting in the *cabarets*, where they fight, in spite of my edicts, or those of my father. You will reorganize the service as soon as possible."

"Yes, sire."

"You will not again quit my person."

"Very well, sire.

"You will march with me to the army, you will encamp round my tent."

"Then, sire," said D'Artagnan, "if it is only to impose upon me a service like that, your majesty need not give me twenty thousand livres a year. I shall not earn them."

"I desire that you shall keep open house; I desire that you shall keep an open table; I desire that my captain of musketeers shall be a personage."

"And I," said D'Artagnan bluntly, "I do not like easily found money; I like money won. Your majesty gives me an idle trade, which the first-comer would perform for four thousand livres."

Louis XIV began to laugh. "You are a true Gascon, Monsieur d'Artagnan; you will draw my heart's secret from me."

"Bah! has your majesty a secret, then?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, then, I accept the twenty thousand livres, for I will keep that secret, and discretion is above all price, in these times. Will your majesty speak now?"

"You will get booted, Monsieur d'Artagnan, and mount on horseback."

"Directly, sire?"

"Within two days."

"That is well, sire, for I have my affairs to settle before I set out; particularly if it is likely there should be any blows stirring."

"That may happen."

"We can receive them. But, sire, you have addressed yourself to the avarice, to the ambition; you have addressed yourself to the heart of Monsieur d'Artagnan, but you have forgotten one thing."

"What is that?"

"You have said nothing to his vanity; when shall I be a knight of the king's orders?"

"Does that interest you?"

"Why, yes, sire. My friend Athos is quite covered with orders, and that dazzles me."

"You shall be a knight of my order a month after you have taken your commission of captain."

"Ah! ah!" said the officer thoughtfully, "after the expedition."

"Precisely."

"Where is your majesty going to send me?"

"Are you acquainted with Bretagne?"

"No, sire."

"Have you any friends there?"

"In Bretagne? No, *ma foi!*"

"So much the better. Do you know anything about fortifications?"

"I believe I do, sire," said D'Artagnan, smiling.

"That is to say, you can readily distinguish a fortress from a simple fortification, such as is allowed to *châtelains* or vassals?"

"I distinguish a fort from a rampart as I distinguish a cuirass from a raised pie-crust, sire. Is that sufficient?"

"Yes, monsieur. You will set out, then."

"For Bretagne?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Absolutely alone. That is to say, you must not even take a lackey with you."

"May I ask your majesty for what reason?"

"Because, monsieur, it will be necessary to disguise yourself sometimes, as the servant of a good family. Your face is very well known in France, Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"And then, sire?"

"And then you will travel slowly through Bretagne, and will examine carefully the fortifications of that country."

"The coasts?"

"Yes, and the isles; commencing by Belle-Isle-en-Mer."

"Ah! which belongs to Monsieur Fouquet?" said D'Artagnan, in a serious tone, raising his intelligent eye to Louis XIV.

"I fancy you are right, monsieur, and that Belle-Isle does belong to Monsieur Fouquet, in fact."

"Then your majesty wishes me to ascertain if Belle-Isle is a good place?"

"Yes."

"If the fortifications of it are new or old?"

"Precisely."

"And if the vassals of Monsieur Fouquet are sufficiently numerous to form a garrison?"

"That is what I want to know; you have placed your finger on the question."

"And if they are not fortifying, sire?"

"You will travel about Bretagne, listening and judging."

"Then I am a king's spy?" said D'Artagnan bluntly, twisting his mustache.

"No, monsieur."

"Your pardon, sire; I spy on your majesty's account."

"You go on a discovery, monsieur. Would you march at the head of your musketeers, with your sword in your hand, to observe any spot whatever, or an enemy's position?"

At this word D'Artagnan started.

"Do you," continued the king, "imagine yourself to be a spy?"

"No, no," said D'Artagnan, but pensively; "the thing changes its face when one observes an enemy; one is but a soldier. And if they are fortifying Belle-Isle?" added he quickly.

"You will take an exact plan of the fortifications."

"Will they permit me to enter?"

"That does not concern me; that is your affair. Did you not understand that I reserved for you a supplement of twenty thousand livres per annum, if you wished for it?"

"Yes, sire; but if they are not fortifying?"

"You will return quietly, without fatiguing your horse."

"Sire, I am ready."

"You will begin to-morrow by going to Monsieur le Surintendant to take the first quarter of the pension I give you. Do you know Monsieur Fouquet?"

"Very little, sire; but I beg your majesty to observe that I don't think it very urgent that I should know him."

"I ask your pardon, monsieur; for he will refuse you the money I wish you to take; and it is that refusal I look for."

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan. "Next, sire?"

"The money being refused, you will go and seek it at Monsieur Colbert's. Apropos, have you a good horse?"

"An excellent one, sire."

"How much did it cost you?"

"A hundred and fifty pistoles."

"I will buy it of you. Here is a note for two hundred pistoles."

"But I want my horse for my journey, sire."

"Well?"

"Well, and you take mine from me."

"Not at all. On the contrary, I give it you. Only, as it is now mine, and not yours, I am sure you will not spare it."

"Your majesty is in a hurry, then?"

"A great hurry."

"Then, what compels me to wait two days?"

"Reasons known to myself."

"That's a different affair. The horse may make up the two days in the eight he has to do; and then there is the post."

"No, no; the post compromises, Monsieur d'Artagnan. Be gone, and do not forget you are mine."

"Sire, it was not I who ever forgot it. At what hour to-morrow shall I take my leave of your majesty?"

"Where do you lodge?"

"I must henceforward lodge at the Louvre."

"That must not be now; keep your lodgings in the city, I will pay for them. As to your departure, it must take place at night; you must set out without being seen by any one, or, if you are seen, it must not be known that you belong to me. A close mouth, monsieur."

"Your majesty spoils all you have said by that single word."

"I asked you where you lodged, for I cannot always send to Monsieur le Comte de la Fère to seek you."

"I lodge with Monsieur Planchet, a grocer, Rue des Lombards, at the sign of the Pilon d'Or."

"Go out but little, show yourself still less, and await my orders."

"And yet, sire, I must go for the money."

"That is true; but when going to the *surintendance*, where so many people are constantly going, you must mingle with the crowd."

"I want the notes, sire, for the money."

"Here they are."

The king signed them, and D'Artagnan looked on, to assure himself of the regularity.

"That is money," said he, "and money is either read or counted."

"Adieu, Monsieur d'Artagnan," added the king; "I think you have perfectly understood me."

"I! I understood that your majesty sends me to Belle-Isle-en-Mer, that is all."

"To learn?"

"To learn how Monsieur Fouquet's works are going on; that is all."

"Very well; I admit you may be taken."

"And I do not admit it," replied the Gascon, boldly.

"I admit that you may be killed," continued the king.

"That is not probable, sire."

"In the first case, you must not speak; in the second, there must be no paper found upon you to speak."

D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders without ceremony, and took leave of the king, saying to himself:

"The English shower continues—let us remain under the spout."

II

THE JOURNEY

It was, perhaps, the fiftieth time since the day on which we opened this history, that this man, with a heart of bronze and muscles of steel, had left house and friends, everything in short, to go in search of fortune and death. The one—that is to say, death—had constantly retreated before him, as if afraid of him; the other—that is to say, fortune—for a month past only had really made an alliance with him. Although he was not a great philosopher, after the fashion of either Epicurus or Socrates, he was a powerful spirit, having knowledge of life, and endowed with thought. No one is as brave, as adventurous, or as skillful as D'Artagnan, without being at the same time inclined to be a dreamer. He had picked up, here and there, some scraps of M. de la Rochefoucauld, worthy of being translated into Latin by M. de Port Royal, and he had made a collection, *en passant*, in the society of Athos and Aramis, of many morsels of Seneca and Cicero, translated by them, and applied to the uses of common life. That contempt of riches which our Gascon had observed as an article of faith during the first thirty-five years of his life, had for a long time been considered by him as the first article of the code of bravery. "Article first," said he, "A man is brave because

he has nothing. A man has nothing because he despises riches." Therefore, with these principles, which, as we have said, had regulated the first thirty-five years of his life, D'Artagnan was no sooner possessed of riches, than he felt it necessary to ask himself if, in spite of his riches, he were still brave. To this, for any other but D'Artagnan, the events of the Place de Grève might have served as a reply. Many consciences would have been satisfied with them, but D'Artagnan was brave enough to ask himself sincerely and conscientiously if he were bra e. Therefore to this:

" But it appears to me that I drew promptly enough, and cut and thrust pretty freely on the Place de Grève, to be satisfied of my bravery," D'Artagnan had himself replied. " Gently, captain, that is not an answer. I was brave that day, because they were burning my house, and there are a hundred, and even a thousand, to speak against one, that if those gentlemen of the riots had not formed that unlucky idea, their plan of attack would have succeeded, or, at least, it would not have been I who would have opposed myself to it. Now, what will be brought against me? I have no house to be burned in Bretagne; I have no treasure there that can be taken from me. No; but I have my skin; that precious skin of Monsieur d'Artagnan, which to him is worth more than all the houses and all the treasures of the world. That skin to which I cling above everything, because it is, everything considered, the binding of a body which incloses a heart very warm and ready to fight, and, consequently, to live. Then, I do desire to live; and, in reality, I live much better, more completely, since I have become rich. Who the devil ever said that money spoiled life! Upon my soul, it is no such thing; on the contrary, it seems as if I absorbed a double quantity of air and sun. *Mordioux!* what will it be then if I double that fortune; and if, instead of the switch I now hold in my hand, I should ever carry the baton of a maréchal? Then, I really don't know if there will be, from that moment, enough of air and sun for me. In fact, this is not a dream. Who the devil would oppose it, if the king made me a maréchal, as his father, King Louis XIII, made

a duke and constable of Albert de Luynes? Am I not as brave, and much more intelligent, than that imbecile De Vitry? Ah! that's exactly what will prevent my advancement; I have too much wit. Luckily, if there is any justice in this world, fortune owes me many compensations. She owes me, certainly, a recompense for all I did for Anne of Austria, and an indemnification for all she has not done for me. Then, at the present, I am very well with a king, and with a king who has the appearance of determining to reign. May God keep him in that illustrious road! For, if he is resolved to reign, he will want me, and if he wants me, he will give me what he has promised me—warmth and light; so that I march, comparatively, now, as I marched formerly —from nothing to everything. Only the nothing of to-day is the all of former days; there has only this little change taken place in my life. And now let us see, let us take the part of the heart, as I just now was speaking of it. But, in truth, I only spoke of it from memory." And the Gascon applied his hand to his breast, as if he were actually seeking the place where his heart was.

"Ah! wretch!" murmured he, smiling with bitterness. "Ah! poor mortal species! You hoped, for an instant, that you had not a heart, and now you find you have one—bad courtier as thou art—and even one of the most seditious. You have a heart which speaks to you in favor of Monsieur Fouquet.

"And what is Monsieur Fouquet, when the king is in question? A conspirator, a real conspirator, who did not even give himself the trouble to conceal his being a conspirator; therefore, what a weapon would you not have against him, if his good grace and his intelligence had not made a scabbard for that weapon. An armed revolt—for, in fact, Monsieur Fouquet has been guilty of an armed revolt. Thus, while the king vaguely suspects Monsieur Fouquet of rebellion, I know it—I could prove that Monsieur Fouquet had caused the shedding of the blood of his majesty's subjects. Now, then, let us see. Knowing all that, and holding my tongue, what further would this heart wish in return for

a kind action of Monsieur Fouquet, for an advance of fifteen thousand livres, for a diamond worth a thousand pistoles, for a smile in which there was as much bitterness as kindness? I save his life.

"Now, then, I hope," continued the musketeer, "that this imbecile of a heart is going to preserve silence, and so be fairly quits with Monsieur Fouquet. Now, then, the king becomes my sun, and as my heart is quits with M. Fouquet, let him beware who places himself between me and my sun! Forward, for His Majesty Louis XIV! Forward!"

These reflections were the only impediments which were able to retard the progress of D'Artagnan. These reflections once made, he increased the speed of his horse. But, however perfect his horse Zephyr might be, it could not hold out at such a pace forever. The day after his departure from Paris he was left at Chartres, at the house of an old friend D'Artagnan had met with in a *hôtellerie* of that city. From that moment, the musketeer traveled on post-horses. Thanks to this mode of locomotion, he traversed the space which separates Chartres from Châteaubriand. In the last of these two cities, far enough from the coast to prevent anyone guessing that D'Artagnan wished to reach the sea—far enough from Paris to prevent all suspicion of his being a messenger from Louis XIV, whom D'Artagnan had called his sun, without suspecting that he who was only at present a rather poor star in the heaven of royalty, would, one day, make that star his emblem, the messenger of Louis XIV, we say, quitted the post and purchased a *bidet* of the meanest appearance, one of those animals which an officer of cavalry would never choose, for fear of being disgraced. Excepting the color, this new acquisition recalled to the mind of D'Artagnan the famous orange-colored horse with which, or, rather, upon which, he had made his first appearance in the world. Truth to say, from the moment he crossed this new steed, it was no longer D'Artagnan who was traveling, it was a good man clothed in an iron gray *juste-au-corps*, brown *haut-de-chausses*, holding the medium between a priest and a layman; that which brought him

nearest to the churchman was that D'Artagnan had placed on his head a *calotte* of threadbare velvet, and over the *calotte* a larger black hat; no more sword; a stick, hung by a cord to his wrist, but to which, he promised himself, as an unexpected auxiliary, to join, upon occasion, a good dagger, ten inches long, concealed under his cloak. The *bidet,* purchased at Châteaubriand, completed the metamorphosis; it was called, or, rather, D'Artagnan called it, Furet (ferret).

"If I have changed Zephyr into Furet," said D'Artagnan, "I must make some diminutive or other of my own name. So, instead of D'Artagnan, I will be Agnan, short; that is a concession which I naturally owe to my gray coat, my round hat, and my rusty *calotte.*"

M. D'Artagnan traveled, then, pretty easily upon Furet, who ambled like a true butter-woman's pad, and who, with his amble, managed cheerfully about twelve leagues a day upon four spindle-shanks of which the practiced eye of D'Artagnan had appreciated the strength and safety beneath the thick mass of hair which covered them. Jogging along, the traveler took notes, studied the country, which he traversed reserved and silent, ever seeking the pretext the most plausible to go to Belle-Isle-en-Mer, and to see everything without arousing suspicion. In this manner, he was enabled to convince himself of the importance the event assumed in proportion as he drew near to it. In this remote country, in this ancient Duchy of Bretagne, which was not France at that period, and is not even so now, the people knew nothing of the King of France. They not only did not know him, but were unwilling to know him. One fact—a single one—floated visibly for them upon the political current. Their ancient dukes no longer governed them; but it was void—nothing more. In the place of the sovereign duke, the seigneurs of parishes reigned without control; and, above these seigneurs, God, who has never been forgotten in Bretagne. Among these suzerains of châteaus and belfries, the most powerful, the most rich, and the most popular, was M. Fouquet, seigneur of Belle-Isle. Even in the country, even within sight of that mysterious isle, legend

and traditions consecrate its wonders. Everyone did not penetrate into it; the isle, of an extent of six leagues in length, and six in breadth, was a seignorial property, which the people had for a long time respected, covered as it was with the name of Retz, so much redoubted in the country. Shortly after the erection of this seigneurie into a marquisate, Belle-Isle passed to M. Fouquet. The celebrity of the isle did not date from yesterday; its name, or, rather, its qualifications, is traced back to the remotest antiquity; the ancients called it Kalonèse, from two Greek words, signifying beautiful isle. Thus, at a distance of eighteen hundred years, it had borne, in another idiom, the same name it still bears. There was, then, something in itself in this property of M. Fouquet's, besides its position of six leagues off the coast of France; a position which makes it a sovereign in its maritime solitude, like a majestic ship which should disdain roads, and would proudly cast its anchors in mid-ocean.

D'Artagnan learned all this without appearing the least in the world astonished. He also learned that the best way to get intelligence was to go to La Roche Bernard, a tolerably important city at the mouth of the Vilaine. Perhaps there he could embark; if not, crossing the salt marshes, he would repair to Guérande en Croisic, to wait for an opportunity to cross over to Belle-Isle. He had discovered, besides, since his departure from Châteaubriand, that nothing would be impossible for Furet under the impulsion of M. Agnan, and nothing to M. Agnan upon the initiative of Furet. He prepared, then, to sup off a teal and a *tourteau,* in a hotel of La Roche Bernard, and ordered to be brought from the cellar, to wash down these two Breton dishes, some cider, which, the moment it touched his lips, he perceived to be more Breton still.

III

HOW D'ARTAGNAN BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH A POET WHO HAD TURNED PRINTER FOR THE SAKE OF PRINTING HIS OWN VERSES

Before taking his place at table, D'Artagnan acquired, as was his custom, all the information he could; but it is an axiom of curiosity, that every man who wishes to question well and fruitfully ought in the first place to lay himself open to questions. D'Artagnan sought, then, with his usual skill, a useful questioner in the hostelry of La Roche Bernard. At the moment, there were in the house, in the first story, two travelers occupied also in preparations for supper, or with their supper itself. D'Artagnan had seen their nags in the stable and their equipages in the *salle*. One traveled with a lackey, as a sort of personage; two Perche mares, sleek, sound beasts, were their means of locomotion. The other, rather a little fellow, a traveler of meager appearance, wearing a dusty surtout, dirty linen, boots more worn by the pavement than the stirrup, had come from Nantes with a cart drawn by a horse so like Furet in color that D'Artagnan might have gone a hundred miles without finding a better match. This cart contained divers large packets wrapped up in pieces of old stuff.

"That traveler there," said D'Artagnan to himself, "is the man for my money. He will do, he suits me; I ought to do for and suit him. Monsieur Agnan, with the gray doublet and the rusty *calotte,* is not unworthy of supping with the gentleman of the old boots and the old horse." This being said, D'Artagnan called the host, and desired him to send his teal, *tourteau,* and cider up to the chamber of the gentleman of modest exterior. He himself climbed, a plate in his hand, the wooden staircase which led to the chamber, and began to knock at the door.

"Come in!" said the unknown. D'Artagnan entered, with a simper on his lips, his plate under his arm, his hat in one hand, his candle in the other.

"Excuse me, monsieur," said he, "I am, as you are, a traveler; I know no one in the hotel, and I have the bad habit of losing my spirits when I eat alone, so that my repast appears a bad one to me, and does not nourish me. Your face, which I saw just now, when you came down to have some oysters opened, your face pleased me much. Besides, I have observed you have a horse just like mine, and that the host, no doubt on account of that resemblance, has placed them side by side in the stable, where they appear to agree amazingly well together. I therefore, monsieur, cannot see why the masters should be separated when the horses are united. In consequence, I am come to request the pleasure of being admitted to your table. My name is Agnan, at your service, monsieur, the unworthy steward of a rich seigneur, who wishes to purchase some salt mines in this country, and sends me to examine his future acquisitions. In truth, monsieur, I should be well pleased if my countenance were as agreeable to you as yours is to me; for, upon my honor, I am quite yours."

The stranger, whom D'Artagnan saw for the first time—for before he had only caught a glimpse of him—the stranger had black and brilliant eyes, a yellow complexion, a brow a little wrinkled by the weight of fifty years, *bonhomie* in his features collectively, but a little cunning in his look.

"One would say," thought D'Artagnan, "that this merry fellow has never exercised more than the upper part of his head, his eyes, and his brain. He must be a man of science; his mouth, nose, and chin signify absolutely nothing."

"Monsieur," replied the latter, with whose mind and person we have been making so free, "you do me much honor; not that I am ever ennuyé, for I have," added he, smiling, "a company which amuses me always; but, never mind that, I am very happy to receive you." But when saying this, the man with the worn boots cast an uneasy look at his

table, from which the oysters had disappeared, and upon which there was nothing left but a morsel of salt bacon.

"Monsieur," D'Artagnan hastened to say, "the host is bringing me up a pretty piece of roasted poultry and a superb *tourteau*." D'Artagnan had read in the look of his companion, however rapid it had been, the fear of an attack by a parasite; he divined justly. At this opening, the features of the man of modest exterior relaxed; and, as if he had watched the moment for his entrance, as D'Artagnan spoke, the host appeared, bearing the announced dishes. The *tourteau* and the teal were added to the morsel of broiled bacon; D'Artagnan and his guest bowed, sat down opposite to each other, and, like two brothers, shared the bacon and the other dishes.

"Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, "you must confess that association is a wonderful thing."

"How so?" replied the stranger, with his mouth full.

"Well, I will tell you," replied D'Artagnan.

The stranger gave a short truce to the movement of his jaws, in order to hear the better.

"In the first place," continued D'Artagnan, "instead of one candle, which each of us had, we have two."

"That is true!" said the stranger, struck with the extreme justness of the observation.

"Then I see that you eat my *tourteau* in preference, while I, in preference, eat your bacon."

"That is true again."

"And then, in addition to being better lighted and eating what we prefer, I place the pleasure of your company."

"Truly, monsieur, you are very jovial," said the unknown cheerfully.

"Yes, monsieur; jovial, as all people are who carry nothing in their heads. Oh! I can see it is quite another sort of thing with you," continued D'Artagnan; "I can read in your eyes all sorts of genius."

"Oh, monsieur!"

"Come, confess one thing."

"What is that?"

"That you are a learned man."

"*Ma foi!* monsieur."

"*Hein?*"

"Almost."

"Come, then!"

"I am an author."

"There!" cried D'Artagnan, clapping his hands, "I knew I could not be deceived! It is a miracle!"

"Monsieur——"

"What! shall I have the honor of passing the evening in the society of an author, of a celebrated author, perhaps?"

"Oh!" said the unknown, blushing, "celebrated, monsieur, celebrated is not the word."

"Modest!" cried D'Artagnan, transported, "he is modest!" Then, turning toward the stranger, with a character of blunt *bonhomie:* "But tell me at least the name of your works, monsieur; for you will please observe you have not told me yours, and I have been forced to divine your genius."

"My name is Jupenet, monsieur," said the author.

"A fine name! a fine name! upon my honor; and I do not know why—pardon me the mistake, if it be one—but surely I have heard that name somewhere."

"I have made verses," said the poet modestly.

"Ah! that is it, then; I have heard them read."

"A tragedy."

"I must have seen it played."

The poet blushed again, and said: "I do not think that can be the case, for my verses have not been printed."

"Well, then, it must have been the tragedy which informed me of your name."

"You are again mistaken, for MM. the comedians of the Hôtel de Bourgogne would have nothing to do with it," said the poet, with the smile of which certain sorts of pride alone know the secret. D'Artagnan bit his lips. "Thus, then, you see, monsieur," continued the poet, "you are in error on my account, and that not being at all known to you, you have never heard speak of me."

"And that confounds me. That name, Jupenet, appears

to me, nevertheless, a fine name, and quite as worthy of being known as those of MM. Corneille, or Rotrou, or Garnier. I hope, monsieur, you will have the goodness to repeat to me a part of your tragedy presently, by way of dessert, for instance. That will be sugared roast meat, *mordioux!* Ah! pardon me, monsieur, that was a little oath which escaped me, because it is a habit with my lord and master. I sometimes allow myself to usurp that little oath, as it seems in good taste. I take this liberty only in his absence, please to observe, for you may understand that in his presence—but, in truth——"

"Monsieur, this cider is abominable; do you not think so? And, besides, the pot is of such an irregular shape it will not stand on the table."

"Suppose we were to make it level?"

"To be sure; but with what?"

"With this knife."

"And the teal, with what shall we cut that up? Do you not, by chance, mean to touch the teal?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then——"

"Wait."

And the poet rummaged in his pocket, and drew out a piece of brass, oblong, quadrangular, about a line in thickness, and an inch and a half in length. But scarcely had this little piece of brass seen the light, than the poet appeared to have committed an imprudence, and made a movement to put it back again in his pocket. D'Artagnan perceived this, for he was a man nothing escaped. He stretched forth his hand toward the piece of brass: "Humph! that which you hold in your hand is pretty; will you allow me to look at it?"

"Certainly," said the poet, who appeared to have yielded too soon to a first impulse. "Certainly, you may look at it; but it will be in vain for you to look at it," added he, with a satisfied air; "if I were not to tell you the use of that, you would never guess it."

D'Artagnan had seized as an avowal the hesitation of the poet, and his eagerness to conceal the piece of brass which

a first movement had induced him to take out of his pocket. His attention, therefore, once awakened on this point, he surrounded himself with a circumspection which gave him a superiority upon all occasions. Besides, whatever M. Jupenet might say about it, by the simple inspection of the object, he had perfectly known what it was. It was a character in printing.

"Can you guess now what this is?" continued the poet.

"No," said D'Artagnan, "no, *ma foi!*"

"Well, monsieur," said M. Jupenet, "this little piece of brass is a printing letter."

"Bah!"

"A capital."

"Stop, stop, stop!" said D'Artagnan, opening his eyes very innocently.

"Yes, monsieur, a capital; the first letter of my name."

"And this is a letter, is it?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, I will confess one thing to you."

"And what is that?"

"No, I will not. I was going to say something very stupid."

"No, no," said Master Jupenet with a patronizing air.

"Well, then, I cannot comprehend, if that is a letter, how you can make a word."

"A word?"

"Yes, a printed word."

"Oh, that's very easy."

"Let me see."

"Does it interest you?"

"Enormously."

"Well, I will explain the thing to you. Attend."

"I am attending."

"That is it."

"Good."

"Look attentively."

"I am looking." D'Artagnan, in fact, appeared absorbed

in his observations. Jupenet drew from his pocket seven or eight other pieces of brass, but smaller than the first.

"Ah, ah," said D'Artagnan.

"What!"

"You have, then, a whole printing office in your pocket. *Peste!* that is curious indeed."

"Is it not?"

"Good God, what a number of things we learn by traveling!"

"To your health!" said Jupenet, quite enchanted.

"To yours, *mordioux!* to yours. But—an instant—not in this cider. It is an abominable drink, unworthy of a man who quenches his thirst at the Hippocrene fountain—is not it so you call your fountains, you poets?"

"Yes, monsieur, our fountain is so called. That comes from two Greek words—*hippos,* which means a horse, and——"

"Monsieur," interrupted D'Artagnan, "you shall drink of a liquor which comes from one single French word, and is none the worse for that—from the word *grape;* this cider gives me the heartburn. Allow me to inquire of your host if there is not a good bottle of Beaugency, or of the Ceran growth, at the back of the large bins of this cellar."

The host, being called, immediately attended.

"Monsieur," interrupted the poet, "take care; we shall not have time to drink the wine, unless we make great haste, for I must take advantage of the tide to secure the boat."

"What boat?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Why, the boat which sets out for Belle-Isle."

"Ah! for Belle-Isle," said the musketeer, "that is good."

"Bah! you will have plenty of time, monsieur," replied the *hôtelier,* uncorking the bottle, "the boat will not leave this hour."

"But who will give me notice?" said the poet.

"Your neighbor," replied the host.

"But I scarcely know him."

"When you hear him going, it will be time for you to go."

"Is he going to Belle-Isle, likewise, then?"

"Yes."

"The monsieur who has a lackey?" asked D'Artagnan. "He is some gentleman, no doubt?"

"I know nothing of him."

"How! know nothing of him?"

"No; all I know is, that he is drinking the same wine as you."

"*Peste!* that is a great honor for us," said D'Artagnan, filling his companion's glass, while the host went out.

"So," resumed the poet, returning to his dominant ideas, "you never saw any printing done?"

"Never."

"Well, then, take the letters thus, which compose the word, you see; A B; *ma foi!* here is an R, two E E, then a G." And he assembled the letters with a swiftness and skill which did not escape the eye of D'Artagnan.

"*Abrégé,*" said he as he ended.

"Good!" said D'Artagnan; "here are plenty of letters got together; but how are they kept so?" And he poured out a second glass for the poet. M. Jupenet smiled like a man who has an answer for everything; then he pulled out—still from his pocket—a little metal ruler, composed of two parts, like a carpenter's rule, against which he put together, and in a line, the characters, holding them under his left thumb.

"And what do you call that little metal ruler?" said D'Artagnan, "for, I suppose, all these things have names."

"This is called a composing-stick," said Jupenet; "it is by the aid of this stick that the lines are formed."

"Come, then, I was not mistaken in what I said; you have a press in your pocket," said D'Artagnan, laughing with an air of simplicity so stupid that the poet was completely his dupe.

"No," replied he; "but I am too lazy to write, and when I have a verse in my head, I print it immediately. That is a labor spared."

"*Mordioux!*" thought D'Artagnan to himself, "this must be cleared up." And under a pretext, which did not embarrass the musketeer, who was fertile in expedients, he left

the table, went downstairs, ran to the shed under which stood the poet's cart, poked the point of his poniard into the stuff which enveloped one of the packages, which he found full of types, like those which the poet had in his pocket.

"Humph!" said D'Artagnan, "I do not yet know whether Monsieur Fouquet wishes to fortify Belle-Isle; but, at all events, here are some spiritual munitions for the castle." Then, rich in his discovery, he ran upstairs again and resumed his place at the table.

D'Artagnan had learned what he wished to know. He, however, remained, none the less, face to face with his partner, to the moment when they heard from the next room symptoms of a person's being about to go out. The printer was immediately on foot; he had given orders for his horse to be got ready. His carriage was waiting at the door. The second traveler got into his saddle, in the courtyard, with his lackey. D'Artagnan followed Jupenet to the door; he embarked his cart and horse on board the boat. As to the opulent traveler, he did the same with his two horses and his servant. But all the wit D'Artagnan employed in endeavoring to find out his name was lost—he could learn nothing. Only he took such notice of his countenance that that countenance was impressed upon his mind forever. D'Artagnan had a great inclination to embark with the two travelers, but an interest, more powerful than curiosity—that of success—repelled him from the shore, and brought him back again to the *hôtellerie*. He entered with a sigh, and went to bed directly, in order to be ready early in the morning with fresh ideas and the counsel of the night.

IV

D'ARTAGNAN CONTINUES HIS INVESTIGATIONS

At daybreak D'Artagnan saddled Furet, who had fared sumptuously all the night and devoured the remainder of the corn left by her companions. The musketeer sifted all

he could out of the host, whom he found cunning, mistrustful, and devoted, body and soul, to M. Fouquet. In order then not to awaken the suspicions of this man, he carried on his fable of being a probable purchaser of some salt mines. To have embarked for Belle-Isle at Roche Bernard would have been to expose himself to comments which had, perhaps, been already made, and would be carried to the castle. Moreover, it was singular that this traveler and his lackey should have remained a secret for D'Artagnan, in spite of all the questions addressed by him to the host, who appeared to know him perfectly well. The musketeer then made some inquiries concerning the salt mines, and took the road to the marshes, leaving the sea to his right, and penetrating into that vast and desolate plain which resembles a sea of mud, of which, here and there, a few crests of salt silver the undulations. Furet walked admirably, with his little nervous legs, along the foot-wide causeways which separate the salt mines. D'Artagnan, aware of the consequences of a fall, which would result in a cold bath, allowed him to go as he liked, contenting himself with looking at, in the horizon, the three rocks, which rose up like lance-blades from the bosom of the plain, destitute of verdure. Pirial, the bourgs of Batz and Le Croisic, exactly resembling each other, attracted and suspended his attention. If the traveler turned round, the better to make his observations, he saw on the other side a horizon of three other steeples, Guérande, Le Poulighen, and St. Joachim, which, in their circumference, represented a set of skittles, of which he and Furet were but the wandering ball. Pirial was the first little port on his right. He went thither, with the names of the principal salters in his mouth. At the moment he visited the little port of Pirial, five large barges, laden with stone, were leaving it. It appeared strange to D'Artagnan that stones should be leaving a country where none are found. He had recourse to all the amenity of M. Agnan to learn from the people of the port the cause of this singularity. An old fisherman replied to M. Agnan, that the stones, very certainly, did not come from Pirial or the marshes.

"Where do they come from, then?" asked the musketeer.

"Monsieur, they come from Nantes and Paimbœuf."

"Where are they going, then?"

"Monsieur, to Belle-Isle."

"Ah! ah!" said D'Artagnan, in the same tone he had assumed to tell the printer that his character interested him; "are they building at Belle-Isle, then?"

"Why, yes, monsieur, Monsieur Fouquet has the walls of the castle repaired every year."

"Is it in ruins, then?"

"It is old."

"Thank you. The fact is," said D'Artagnan to himself, "nothing is more natural; every proprietor has a right to repair his property. It would be like telling me I was fortifying the Image de Notre Dame, when I should be purely and simply obliged to make repairs. In good truth, I believe false reports have been made to his majesty, and he is very likely to be in the wrong.

"You must confess," continued he then, aloud, and addressing the fisherman—for his part of a suspicious man was imposed upon him by the object even of his mission—"you must confess, my dear monsieur, that these stones travel in a very curious fashion."

"How so?" said the fisherman.

"They come from Nantes or Paimbœuf by the Loire, do they not?"

"That descends."

"That is convenient, I don't say it is not; but why do they not go straight from St. Nazaire to Belle-Isle?"

"Eh! because the *chalands* (barges) are bad boats, and keep the sea badly," replied the fisherman.

"That is not a reason."

"Pardon me, monsieur, one may see that you have never been a sailor," added the fisherman, not without a sort of disdain.

"Explain that to me, if you please, my good man. It appears to me that to come from Paimbœuf to Pirial, and go

from Pirial to Belle-Isle, is as if we went from Roche Bernard to Nantes, and from Nantes to Pirial."

"By water that would be the nearest way," replied the fisherman imperturbably.

"But there is an elbow." The fisherman shook his head. "The shortest road from one place to another is a straight line," continued D'Artagnan.

"You forget the tide, monsieur."

"Well, take the tide."

"And the wind."

"Well, and the wind."

"Without doubt, the current of the Loire carries barks almost as far as Croisic. If they want to lie by a little, or to refresh the crew, they come to Pirial along the coast; from Pirial they find another inverse current, which carries them to the Isle Dumal, two leagues and a half."

"Granted."

"There the current of the Vilaine throws them upon another isle, the isle of Hoedic."

"I agree to that."

"Well, monsieur, from that isle to Belle Isle the way is quite straight. The sea, broken both above and below, passes like a canal—like a mirror between the two isles; the *chalands* glide along upon it like ducks upon the Loire; that is it."

"It does not signify," said the obstinate M. Agnan; "it is very far about."

"Ah, yes! Monsieur Fouquet will have it so," replied, as conclusive, the fisherman, taking off his woolen cap at the enunciation of that respected name.

A look from D'Artagnan, a look as keen and piercing as a sword-blade, found nothing in the heart of the old man but simple confidence on his features, nothing but satisfaction and indifference. He said, "Monsieur Fouquet will have it so," as he would have said, "God has willed it."

D'Artagnan had already advanced too far in this direction; besides, the *chalands* being gone, there remained nothing at Pirial but a single bark—that of the old man, and it

did not look fit for sea without great preparation. D'Artagnan therefore aroused Furet, who, as a new proof of his charming character, resumed his march with his feet in the salt mines, and his nose to the dry wind, which bends the furze and the broom of this country. He reached Croisic about five o'clock.

If D'Artagnan had been a poet, it was a beautiful spectacle that of the immense strand of a league or more, which the sea covers at high tides, and which, at the reflux, appears gray, desolate, spread over with polypuses and seaweed, with its pebbles dispersed and white, like the bones in some vast old cemetery. But the soldier, the politician, and the ambitious man had no longer the sweet consolation of looking toward heaven, to read there a hope or a warning. A red sky signifies nothing to such people but wind and disturbance. White and fleecy clouds upon the azure only say that the sea will be smooth and peaceful. D'Artagnan found the sky blue, the breeze embalmed with saline perfumes, and he said: "I will embark with the first tide, if it be but in a nutshell."

At Croisic as at Pirial, he had remarked enormous heaps of stone lying along the shore. These gigantic walls, demolished every tide by the transport operated upon them for Belle-Isle, were, in the eyes of the musketeer, the consequence and the proof of what he had well divined at Pirial. Was it a wall that M. Fouquet was constructing? was it a fortification that he was erecting? To ascertain that he must see it. D'Artagnan put Furet into a stable, supped, went to bed, and on the morrow took a walk upon the port, or, rather, upon the shingle. Le Croisic has a port of fifty feet; it has a lookout which resembles an enormous *brioche* (a kind of cake) elevated on a dish. The flat strand is the dish. Hundreds of barrowsful of earth, solidified with the pebbles, and rounded into cones, with sinuous passages between, are lookouts and *brioches* at the same time. It is so now, and it was two hundred years ago, only the *brioche* was less large, and probably there were not to be seen trellises of lath around the *brioche,* which constitute the ornament of it,

and which the edility of that poor and pious bourgade has planted like *gardes-fous* along the passages, winding toward the little terrace. Upon the shingle were three or four fishermen talking about sardines and shrimps. D'Artagnan, with his eye animated by rough gayety, and a smile upon his lips, approached these fishermen.

"Any fishing going on to-day?" said he.

"Yes, monsieur," replied one of them, "we are only waiting for the tide."

"Where do you fish, my friends?"

"Upon the coasts, monsieur."

"Which are the best coasts?"

"Ah, that is according. The tour of the isles, for example."

"Yes, but they are a long way off, those isles, are they not?"

"Not very; four leagues."

"Four leagues! That is a voyage."

The fisherman laughed out in M. Agnan's face.

"Hear me, then," said the latter, with an air of simple stupidity; "four leagues off you lose sight of land, do you not?"

"Why, not always."

"Ah, it is a long way—too long, or else I would have asked you to take me aboard, and to show me what I have never seen."

"What is that?"

"A live sea-fish."

"Monsieur comes from the province?" said a fisherman.

"Yes, I come from Paris."

The Breton shrugged his shoulders; then, "Have you ever seen Monsieur Fouquet in Paris?" asked he.

"Often," replied D'Artagnan.

"Often!" repeated the fishermen, closing their circle round the Parisian. "Do you know him?"

"A little; he is the intimate friend of my master."

"Ah!" said the fishermen in astonishment.

"And," said D'Artagnan, "I have seen all his châteaus of St. Mandé, of Vaux, and his hotel in Paris."

"Is that a fine place?"

"Superb."

"It is not so fine a place as Belle-Isle," said the fisherman.

"Bah!" cried M. d'Artagnan, breaking into a laugh so loud that he angered all his auditors.

"It is very plain you have never seen Belle-Isle," said the most curious of the fishermen. "Do you know that there are six leagues of it; and that there are such trees on it as cannot be equaled even at Nantes sur le Fossé?"

"Trees in the sea!" cried D'Artagnan; "well, I should like to see them."

"That can be easily done; we are fishing at the Isle de Hoedic—come with us. From that place you will see, as a paradise, the black trees of Belle-Isle against the sky; you will see the white line of the castle, which cuts the horizon of the sea like a blade."

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, "that must be very beautiful. But do you know there are a hundred belfries at Monsieur Fouquet's château of Vaux?"

The Breton raised his head in profound admiration, but he was not convinced. "A hundred belfries! Ah, that may be; but Belle-Isle is finer than that. Should you like to see Belle-Isle?"

"Is that possible?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes, with permission of the governor."

"But I do not know the governor."

"As you know Monsieur Fouquet, you can tell your name."

"Oh, my friends, I am not a gentleman."

"Everybody enters Belle-Isle," continued the fisherman, in his strong, pure language, "provided he means no harm to Belle-Isle or its master."

A slight shudder crept over the body of the musketeer. "That is true," thought he. Then, recovering himself, "If I were sure," said he, "not to be seasick."

"What, upon her?" said the fisherman, pointing with pride to his pretty, round-bottomed bark.

"Well, you almost persuade me," cried M. Agnan; "I will go and see Belle-Isle, but they will not admit me."

"We shall enter safe enough."

"You! What for?"

"Why, *dame!* to sell fish to the corsairs."

"He! Corsairs—what do you mean?"

"Well, I mean that Monsieur Fouquet is having two corsairs built to chase the Dutch and the English, and we sell our fish to the crews of those little vessels."

"Come, come!" said D'Artagnan to himself; "better and better. A printing-press, bastions, and corsairs! Well, Monsieur Fouquet is not an enemy to be despised, as I presumed to fancy. He is worth the trouble of traveling to see him nearer."

"We set out at half-past five," said the fisherman gravely.

"I am quite ready, and I will not leave you now." So D'Artagnan saw the fishermen haul their barks to meet the tide with a windlass. The sea rose; M. Agnan allowed himself to be hoisted on board, not without sporting a little fear and awkwardness, to the amusement of the young sea urchins who watched him with their large, intelligent eyes. He laid himself down upon a folded sail, did not interfere with anything while the bark prepared for sea; and, with its large square sail, it was fairly out within two hours. The fishermen, who prosecuted their occupation as they proceeded, did not perceive that their passenger had not become pale, had neither groaned nor suffered; that, in spite of the horrible tossing and rolling of the bark, to which no hand imparted direction, the novice passenger had preserved his presence of mind and appetite. They fished, and their fishing was sufficiently fortunate. To lines baited with prawn, soles came, with numerous gambols, to bite. Two nets had already been broken by the immense weight of congers and haddocks; three sea eels plowed the hold with their slimy folds and their dying contortions. D'Artagnan brought them good luck; they told him so. The soldier found the

occupation so pleasant, that he put his hand to the work—that is to say, to the lines—and uttered roars of joy, and *mordioux* enough to have astonished musketeers themselves, every time that a shock given to his line by a captured prey required the play of the muscles of his arm and the employment of his skill and strength. The party of pleasure had made him forget his diplomatic mission. He was struggling with an awfully large conger, and holding fast with one hand to the side of the vessel, in order to seize with the other the gaping jowl of his antagonist, when the patron said to him: "Take care they don't see you from Belle-Isle!"

These words produced the same effect upon D'Artagnan as the hissing of the first bullet on a day of battle; he let go of both line and conger, which, one dragging the other, returned again to the water. D'Artagnan perceived, within half a league at most, the blue and marked profile of the rocks of Belle-Isle dominated by the white majestic line of the castle. In the distance, the land with its forests and verdant plains; cattle on the grass. This was what first attracted the attention of the musketeer. The sun darted its rays of gold upon the sea, raising a shining mist or dust around this enchanted isle. Nothing could be seen of it, owing to this dazzling light, but the flattened points; every shadow was strongly marked, and cut with a band of darkness the luminous sheet of the fields and the walls. "Eh! eh!" said D'Artagnan, at the aspect of those masses of black rocks, "these are fortifications which do not stand in need of any engineer to render a landing difficult. What the devil way could a landing be effected on that isle, which God has defended so completely?"

"This way," replied the patron of the bark, changing the sail, and impressing upon the rudder a twist which turned the boat in the direction of a pretty little port, quite coquettish, quite round, and quite newly battlemented.

"What the devil do I see yonder?" said D'Artagnan.

"You see Leomaria," replied the fisherman.

"Well, but there?"

"That is Bragos."

"And further on?"

"Sanger, and then the palace."

"*Mordioux!* It is a world. Ah! there are some soldiers."

"There are seventeen hundred men in Belle-Isle, monsieur," replied the fisherman proudly. "Do you know that the least garrison is of twenty companies of infantry?"

"*Mordioux!*" cried D'Artagnan, stamping with his foot. "His majesty was right enough." They landed.

V

IN WHICH THE READER, NO DOUBT, WILL BE AS ASTONISHED AS D'ARTAGNAN WAS TO MEET WITH AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE

THERE is always something in a landing, if it be only from the smallest sea-boat—a trouble and a confusion which do not leave the mind the liberty of which it stands in need in order to study at the first glance the new place that is represented to it. The movable bridges, the agitated sailors, the noise of the water upon the pebbles, the cries and the importunities of those who wait upon the shores are multiplied details of that sensation which is summed up in one single result—hesitation. It was not, then, till after standing several minutes on the shore that D'Artagnan saw upon the port, but more particularly in the interior of the isle, an immense number of workmen in motion. At his feet D'Artagnan recognized the five *chalands* laden with rough stone which he had seen leave the port of Pirial. The stones were transported to the shore by means of a chain formed by twenty-five or thirty peasants. The large stones were loaded upon carriages which conveyed them in the same direction as the shards, that is to say, toward the works, of which D'Artagnan could as yet appreciate neither the strength nor the extent. Everywhere was to be seen an activity equal to that which Telemachus observed on his landing at Sarentum. D'Artagnan felt a strong inclination

to penetrate into the interior; but he could not, under the penalty of exciting mistrust, exhibit too much curiosity. He advanced then only little by little, scarcely going beyond the line formed by the fishermen on the beach, observing everything, saying nothing, and meeting all suspicions that might have been excited with a half-silly question or a polite bow. And yet, while his companions carried on their trade, giving or selling their fish to the workmen or the inhabitants of the city, D'Artagnan had gained ground by degrees, and, reassured by the little attention paid to him, he began to cast an intelligent and confident look upon the men and things that appeared before his eyes. And his very first glance fell upon movements of earth in which the eye of a soldier could not be mistaken. At the two extremities of the port, in order that the fires should cross upon the great axis of the ellipsis formed by the basin, in the first place, two batteries had been raised, evidently destined to receive flank pieces, for D'Artagnan saw the workmen finishing the platforms and making ready the demi-circumference in wood upon which the wheel of the pieces might turn to embrace every direction over the epaulment. By the side of each of these batteries other workmen were strengthening gabions filled with earth, the lining of another battery. The latter had embrasures, and a conductor of the works called successively men who with cords tied the *saucissons,* and those who cut the lozenges and right angles of turfs destined to retain the matting of the embrasures. By the activity displayed in these works, already so far advanced, they might be considered as terminated; they were not yet furnished with their cannons, but the platforms had their *gîtes* and their *madriers* all prepared; the earth, beaten carefully, had consolidated them; and, supposing the artillery to be on the island, in less than two or three days the port might be completely armed. That which astonished D'Artagnan, when he turned his eyes from the coast batteries to the fortifications of the city, was to see that Belle-Isle was defended by an entirely new system, of which he had often heard the Comte de la Fère speak as a great

advancement, but of which he had never yet seen the application. These fortifications belonged neither to the Dutch method of Marollais, nor to the French method of the Chevalier Antoine de Ville, but to the system of Manesson Mallet, a skillful engineer, who, for about six or eight years, had quitted the service of Portugal to enter that of France. These works had the peculiarity that, instead of rising above the earth, as did the ancient ramparts destined to defend a city from escalades, they, on the contrary, sunk into it; and what created the height of the walls was the depth of the ditches. It did not take long to make D'Artagnan perceive the superiority of such a system, which gives no advantage to cannon. Besides, as the *fossés* were lower than, or on a level with, the sea, these *fossés* might be inundated by subterranean sluices. Otherwise, the works were almost complete, and a group of workmen, receiving orders from a man who appeared to be conductor of the works, were occupied in placing the last stones. A bridge of planks, thrown over the *fossés* for the greater convenience of the maneuvers connected with the barrows, joined the interior to the exterior. With an air of simple curiosity, D'Artagnan asked if he might be permitted to cross the bridge, and he was told that no order prevented it. Consequently, he crossed the bridge, and advanced toward the group.

This group was superintended by the man whom D'Artagnan had already remarked, and who appeared to be the engineer-in-chief. A plan was lying open before him upon a large stone forming a table, and at some paces from him a crane was in action. This engineer, who, by his evident importance, first attracted the attention of D'Artagnan, wore a *juste-au-corps,* which, from its sumptuousness, was scarcely in harmony with the work he was employed in, which would rather have necessitated the costume of a master mason than of a noble. He was, besides, a man of high stature and large square shoulders, wearing a hat covered with feathers. He gesticulated in the most majestic manner, and appeared, for D'Artagnan only saw his back, to be

scolding the workmen for their idleness and want of strength.

D'Artagnan continued to draw nearer. At that moment the man with the feathers had ceased to gesticulate, and, with his hands placed upon his knees, was following, half bent, the effort of six workmen to raise a block of hewn stone to the top of a piece of timber destined to support that stone, so that the cord of the crane might be passed under it. The six men, all on one side of the stone, united their efforts to raise it to eight or ten inches from the ground, sweating and blowing, while a seventh got ready, when there should be daylight enough beneath it, to slide in the roller that was to support it. But the stone had already twice escaped from their hands before gaining a sufficient height for the roller to be introduced. There can be no doubt that every time the stone escaped them they bounded quickly backward, to keep their feet from being crushed by the refalling stone. Every time the stone, abandoned by them, sunk deeper into the damp earth, which rendered the operation more and more difficult. A third effort was followed by no better success, but with progressive discouragement. And yet, when the six men were bent toward the stone, the man with the feathers had himself, with a powerful voice, given the word of command, "Firm!" which presides over all maneuvers of strength. Then he drew himself up.

"Oh! oh!" said he, "what is all this about? Have I to do with men of straw? *Corne de bœuf!* stand on one side, and you shall see how this is to be done."

"*Peste!*" said D'Artagnan, "will he pretend to raise that rock? That would be a sight worth looking at."

The workmen, as commanded by the engineer, drew back with their ears down, and, shaking their heads, with the exception of the one who held the plank, who prepared to perform the office. The man with the feathers went up to the stone, stooped, slipped his hands under the face lying upon the ground, stiffened his Herculean muscles, and, without a strain, with a slow motion, like that of a machine, he lifted the end of the rock a foot from the ground. The

workman who held the plank profited by the space thus given him, and slipped the roller under the stone.

"That's the way," said the giant, not letting the rock fall again, but placing it upon its support.

"*Mordioux!*" cried D'Artagnan, "I know but one man capable of such a feat of strength."

"*Hein!*" cried the colossus, turning round.

"Porthos!" murmured D'Artagnan, seized with stupor, "Porthos at Belle-Isle?"

On his part, the man with the feathers fixed his eyes upon the disguised lieutenant, and, in spite of his metamorphosis, recognized him.

"D'Artagnan!" cried he; and the color mounted to his face. "Hush!" said he to D'Artagnan.

"Hush!" in his turn said the musketeer. In fact, if Porthos had just been discovered by D'Artagnan, D'Artagnan had just been discovered by Porthos. The interest of the particular secret of each struck them both at the same time. Nevertheless, the first movement of the two men was to throw their arms round each other. What they wished to conceal from the by-standers was, not their friendship, but their names. But after the embrace came the reflection.

"What the devil brings Porthos to Belle-Isle, lifting stones?" said D'Artagnan; only D'Artagnan uttered that question in a low voice. Less strong in diplomacy than his friend, Porthos thought aloud.

"How the devil did you come to Belle-Isle?" asked he of D'Artagnan; "and what do you come to do here?"

It was necessary to reply without hesitation. To hesitate in his answer to Porthos would have been a check, for which the self-love of D'Artagnan would never have consoled itself.

"*Pardieu!* my friend, I am at Belle-Isle because you are here."

"Ah, bah!" said Porthos, visibly stupefied with the argument, and seeking to account for it to himself with that lucidity of deduction which we know to be peculiar to him.

"Without doubt," continued D'Artagnan, unwilling to

give his friend time to recollect himself, "I have been to see you at Pierrefonds."

"Indeed!"

"Yes."

"And you did not find me there?"

"No; but I found Mouston."

"Is he well?"

"*Peste!*"

"Well, but Mouston did not tell you I was here."

"Why should he not? Have I, perchance, deserved to lose his confidence?"

"No; but he did not know it."

"Well, that is a reason at least not offensive to my self-love."

"Then, how did you manage to find me?"

"My dear friend, a great noble, like you, always leaves traces behind him on his passage; and I should think but poorly of myself if I were not sharp enough to follow the traces of my friends."

This explanation, flattering as it was, did not entirely satisfy Porthos.

"But I left no traces behind me, as I came here disguised," said Porthos.

"Ah! You came disguised, did you?" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes."

"And how?"

"As a miller."

"And do you think a great noble like you, Porthos, can affect common manners so as to deceive people?"

"Well, I swear to you, my friend, that I played my part so well that everybody was deceived."

"Indeed! so well that I have not discovered and joined you?"

"Yes; but how have you discovered and joined me?"

"Stop a bit. I was going to tell you how. Do you imagine Mouston——"

"Ah! it was that fellow, Mouston," said Porthos, gather-

ing together those two triumphant arches which served him for eyebrows.

"But stop, I tell you—it was no fault of Mouston's, because he was ignorant of where you were."

"I know he was; and that is why I am in such haste to understand——"

"Oh! how impatient you are, Porthos."

"When I do not comprehend, I am terrible."

"Well, you will understand. Aramis wrote to you at Pierrefonds, did he not?"

"Yes."

"And he told you to come before the equinox."

"That is true."

"Well, that is it," said D'Artagnan, hoping that this reason would satisfy Porthos. Porthos appeared to give himself up to a violent mental labor.

"Yes, yes," said he, "I understand. As Aramis told me to come before the equinox, you have understood that that was to join him. You then inquired where Aramis was, saying to yourself, 'Where Aramis is, there Porthos will be.' You have learned that Aramis was in Bretagne, and you said to yourself, 'Porthos is in Bretagne.'"

"Exactly. In good truth, Porthos, I cannot tell why you have not turned conjurer. So you understand that, arriving at Roche Bernard, I heard of the splendid fortifications going on at Belle-Isle. The account raised my curiosity. I embarked in a fishing-boat, without dreaming that you were here; I came, and I saw a fine fellow lifting a stone which Ajax could not have stirred. I cried out, 'Nobody but the Baron de Bracieux could have performed such a feat of strength.' You heard me, you turned round, you recognized me, we embraced; and, *ma foi!* if you like, my dear friend, we will embrace again."

"Ah! now it is all explained," said Porthos; and he embraced D'Artagnan with so much friendship as to deprive the musketeer of his breath for five minutes.

"Why, you are stronger than ever," said D'Artagnan, "and still in your arms."

Porthos saluted D'Artagnan with a gracious smile. During the five minutes D'Artagnan was recovering his breath, he reflected that he had a very difficult part to play. It was necessary that he should question without ever replying. By the time his respiration returned, he had fixed his plan of the campaign.

VI

WHEREIN THE IDEAS OF D'ARTAGNAN, AT FIRST VERY TROUBLED, BEGIN TO CLEAR UP A LITTLE

D'Artagnan immediately took the offensive.

"Now that I have told you all, my dear friend, or, rather now you have guessed all, tell me what you are doing here, covered with dust and mud?"

Porthos wiped his brow, and looked around him with pride.

"Why, it appears," said he, "that you may see what I am doing here."

"No doubt, no doubt, you lift great stones."

"Oh! to show these idle fellows what a man is," said Porthos, with contempt. "But you understand——"

"Yes, that it is not your place to lift stones, although there are many whose place it is, who cannot lift them as you do. It was that which made me ask you just now, 'What are you doing here, baron?'"

"I am studying topography, chevalier."

"You are studying topography?"

"Yes; but you—what are you doing in that common dress?"

D'Artagnan perceived he had committed a fault in giving expression to his astonishment. Porthos had taken advantage of it to retort with a question.

"Why," said he, "you know I am a bourgeois, in fact; my dress, then, has nothing astonishing in it, since it conforms with my condition."

"Nonsense! you are a musketeer."

"You are wrong, my friend; I have given in my resignation."

"Bah!"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* yes."

"And have you abandoned the service?"

"I have quitted it."

"You have abandoned the king?"

"Quite."

Porthos raised his arms toward heaven, like a man who has heard extraordinary news.

"Well, that does confound me!" said he.

"It is, nevertheless, true."

"And what led you to form such a resolution?"

"The king displeased me. Mazarin had disgusted me for a long time, as you know; so I threw my cassock to the nettles."

"But Mazarin is dead."

"I know that well enough, *parbleau!* Only, at the period of his death, my resignation had been given in and accepted two months. Then, feeling myself free, I set off for Pierrefonds, to see my friend Porthos. I had heard talk of the happy division you had made of your time, and I wished, for a fortnight, to divide mine after your fashion."

"My friend, you know that it is not for a fortnight the house is open to you; it is for a year—for ten years—for life."

"Thank you, Porthos."

"Ah! but perhaps you want money—do you?" said Porthos, making something like fifty louis chink in his pocket. "In that case, you know——"

"No, thank you; I am not in want of anything. I placed my savings with Planchet, who pays me the interest of them."

"Your savings?"

"Yes, to be sure," said D'Artagnan. "Why should I not put by savings, as well as another, Porthos?"

"Oh, there is no reason why; on the contrary, I always

suspected you—that is to say, Aramis always suspected you to have savings. For my own part, d'ye see, I take no concern about the management of my household; but I presume the savings of a musketeer must be small."

"No doubt, relative to yourself, Porthos, who are a millionaire; but you shall judge. I had laid by twenty-five thousand livres."

"That's pretty well," said Porthos, with an affable air.

"And," continued D'Artagnan, "on the 28th of last month I added to it two hundred thousand livres more."

Porthos opened his large eyes, which eloquently demanded of the musketeer, "Where the devil did you steal such a sum as that, my dear friend?"

"Two hundred thousand livres!" cried he, at length.

"Yes; which, with the twenty-five I had, and twenty thousand I have about me, complete the sum of two hundred and forty-five thousand livres."

"But tell me, whence comes this fortune?"

"I will tell you all about it presently, dear friend; but as you have, in the first place, many things to tell me yourself, let us place my recital in its proper rank."

"Bravo!" said Porthos; "then we are both rich. But what can I have to relate to you?"

"You have to relate to me how Aramis came to be named——"

"Ah! Bishop of Vannes."

"That's it;" said D'Artagnan, "Bishop of Vannes. Dear Aramis! do you know how he succeeded so well?"

"Yes, yes; without reckoning that he does not mean to stop there."

"What! do you mean he will not be contented with violet stockings, and that he wants a red hat?"

"Hush! that is promised him."

"Bah! by the king."

"By somebody more powerful than the king."

"Ah! the devil! Porthos, what incredible things you tell me, my friend!"

"Why incredible? Is there not always somebody in France more powerful than the king?"

"Oh, yes; in the time of King Louis XIII it was Cardinal Richelieu; in the time of the regency it was Cardinal Mazarin. In the time of Louis XIV it is Monsieur——"

"Go on."

"It is Monsieur Fouquet."

"Jove! you have hit it the first time."

"So, then, I suppose it is Monsieur Fouquet who has promised Aramis the red hat?"

Porthos assumed an air of reserve.

"Dear friend," said he, "God preserve me from meddling with the affairs of others, above all, from revealing secrets it may be to their interest to be kept. When you see Aramis, he will tell you all he thinks he ought to tell you."

"You are right, Porthos; and you are quite a padlock for safety. But to revert to yourself."

"Yes," said Porthos.

"You said just now you came hither to study topography?"

"I did so."

"*Tu Dieu!* my friend, what fine things you will do!"

"How do you mean?"

"Why, these fortifications are admirable."

"Is that your opinion?"

"Doubtless it is. In truth, to anything but a regular siege, Belle-Isle is impregnable."

Porthos rubbed his hands.

"That is my opinion," said he.

"But who the devil has fortified this paltry little place in this manner?"

Porthos drew himself up proudly:

"Did not I tell you who?"

"No."

"Do you not suspect?"

"No; all that I can say is that he is a man who has studied all the systems, and who appears to me to have stopped at the best."

"Hush!" said Porthos; "consider my modesty, my dear D'Artagnan."

"In truth," replied the musketeer, "can it be you—who—oh—!"

"Pray—my dear friend——"

"You, who have imagined, traced, and combined between these bastions, these redans, these curtains, these half-moons, and are preparing that covered way?"

"I beg you——"

"You who have built that lunette with its retiring angles and its salient angles."

"My friend——"

"You who have given that inclination to the openings of your embrasures, by means of which you so effectively protect the men who serve the guns."

"Eh! *mon Dieu!* yes."

"Oh! Porthos, Porthos! I must bow down before you—I must admire you! But you have always concealed from us this superior genius. I hope, my dear friend, you will show me all this in detail?"

"Nothing more easy. There is my plan."

"Show it me."

Porthos led D'Artagnan toward the stone which served him for a table, and upon which the plan was spread. At the foot of the plan was written, in the formidable writing of Porthos, writing of which we have already had occasion to speak:

"Instead of making use of the square or rectangle, as has been done to this time, you will suppose your place inclosed in a regular hexagon, this polygon having the advantage of offering more angles than the quadrilateral one. Every side of your hexagon, of which you will determine the length in proportion of the dimensions taken upon the place, will be divided into two parts, and upon the middle point you will elevate a perpendicular toward the center of the polygon, which will equal in length the sixth part of the side. By the extremities of each side of

the polygon, you will trace two diagonals, which will cut the perpendicular. These two rights will form the lines of the defense."

"The devil!" said D'Artagnan, stopping at this point of the demonstration. "Why, this is a complete system, Porthos."

"Entirely," said Porthos. "Will you continue?"

"No; I have read enough of it; but, since it is you, my dear Porthos, who direct the works, what need have you of setting down your system so formally in writing?"

"Oh! my dear friend, death!"

"How, death?"

"Why, we are all mortal, are we not?"

"That is true," said D'Artagnan; "you have a reply for everything, my friend."

And he replaced the plan upon the stone.

But however short a time he had the plan in his hands, D'Artagnan had been able to distinguish, under the enormous writing of Porthos, a much more delicate hand, which reminded him of certain letters to Marie Michon, with which he had been acquainted in his youth. Only the India-rubber had passed and repassed so often over this writing that it might have escaped a less practiced eye than that of our musketeer.

"Bravo! my friend, bravo!" said D'Artagnan.

"And now you know all that you want to know, do you not?" said Porthos, wheeling about.

"*Mordioux!* yes, only do me one last favor, dear friend."

"Speak; I am master here."

"Do me the pleasure to tell me the name of that gentleman who is walking yonder."

"Where—there?"

"Behind the soldiers."

"Followed by a lackey?"

"Exactly."

"In company with a mean sort of fellow dressed in black?"

"Yes, I mean him."

"That is Monsieur Gétard."

"And who is Gétard, my friend?"

"He is the architect of the house."

"Of what house?"

"Of Monsieur Fouquet's house."

"Ah! ah!" cried D'Artagnan, "you are of the household of Monsieur Fouquet, then, Porthos?"

"I! what do you mean by that?" said the topographer, blushing to the top of his ears.

"Why, you say the house, when speaking of Belle-Isle, as if you were speaking of the château of Pierrefonds."

Porthos bit his lips.

"Belle-Isle, my friend," said he, "belongs to Monsieur Fouquet, does it not?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"As Pierrefonds belongs to me?"

"I told you I believed so; there are not two words to that."

"Did you ever see a man there who is accustomed to walk about with a ruler in his hand?"

"No; but I might have seen him there, if he really walked there."

"Well, that gentleman is Monsieur Boulingrin."

"Who is Monsieur Boulingrin?"

"Now we come to it. If, when this gentleman is walking with a ruler in his hand, anyone should ask me, 'Who is Monsieur Boulingrin?' I should reply, 'He is the architect of the house.' Well, Monsieur Gétard is the Boulingrin of Monsieur Fouquet. But he has nothing to do with the fortifications, which are my department alone. Do you understand?—mine, absolutely mine."

"Ah! Porthos," cried D'Artagnan, letting his arms fall as a conquered man gives up his sword; "ah! my friend, you are not only a Herculean topographer, you are, still further, a dialectician of the first water."

"Is it not powerfully reasoned?" said Porthos; and he

puffed and blew like the conger which D'Artagnan had let slip from his hand.

"And now," said D'Artagnan, "that shabby-looking man, who accompanies Monsieur Gétard, is he also of the household of Monsieur Fouquet?"

"Oh, yes!" said Porthos, with contempt; "it is one Monsieur Jupenet, or Juponet, a sort of poet."

"Who is come to establish himself here?"

"I believe so."

"I thought Monsieur Fouquet had poets enough yonder —Scudéry, Loret, Pelisson, La Fontaine? If I must tell you the truth, Porthos, that poet disgraces you."

"Eh! my friend, but what saves us is that he is not here as a poet."

"As what, then, is he?"

"As printer. And you make me remember I have a word to say to the *cuistre*."

"Say it, then."

Porthos made a sign to Jupenet, who perfectly recollected D'Artagnan, and did not care to come nearer; which naturally produced another sign from Porthos. This was so imperative, he was obliged to obey. As he approached:

"Come, hither," said Porthos. "You only landed yesterday, and you have begun your tricks already."

"How so, Monsieur le Baron?" asked Jupenet, trembling.

"Your press was groaning all night, monsieur," said Porthos, "and you prevented my sleeping, *corne de bœuf!*"

"Monsieur——" objected Jupenet timidly.

"You have nothing yet to print; therefore, you have no occasion to set your press going. What did you print last night?"

"Monsieur, a light poem of my own composition."

"Light! No, no, monsieur; the press groaned pitifully with it. Let that not happen again. Do you understand?"

"No, monsieur."

"You promise me?"

"I do, monsieur."

"Very well; this time I pardon you. Adieu.

"Well, now we have combed that fellow's head, let us breakfast."

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan; "let us breakfast."

"Only," said Porthos, "I beg you to observe, my friend, that we have only two hours for our repast."

"What would you have? We will try to make enough of it. But why have you only two hours?"

"Because it is high tide at one o'clock, and, with the tide, I am going to Vannes. But, as I shall return to-morrow, my dear friend, you can stay here; you shall be master; I have a good cook, and a good cellar."

"No," interrupted D'Artagnan, "better than that."

"What?"

"You are going to Vannes, you say?"

"To a certainty."

"To see Aramis?"

"Yes."

"Well, I came to Paris on purpose to see Aramis."

"That is true."

"I will go with you, then."

"Do; that's the thing."

"Only, I ought to have seen Aramis first, and you after, But man proposes, and God disposes. I have begun with you, and will finish with Aramis."

"Very well."

"And in how many hours can you go from hence to Vannes?"

"Oh! *pardieux!* in six hours. Three hours by sea to Sarzeau, three hours by road from Sarzeau to Vannes."

"How convenient that is! Being so near to the bishopric, do you often go to Vannes?"

"Yes; once a week. But, stop till I get my plan."

Porthos picked up his plan, folded it carefully, and engulfed it in his large pocket.

"Good!" said D'Artagnan, aside; "I think I now know the true engineer who is fortifying Belle-Isle."

Two hours after, at high tide, Porthos and D'Artagnan set out for Sarzeau.

VII

A PROCESSION AT VANNES

THE passage from Belle-Isle to Sarzeau was made rapidly enough, thanks to one of those little corsairs of which D'Artagnan had been told during his voyage, and which, shaped for fast sailing and destined for the chase, were sheltered at that time in the road of Loc-Maria, where one of them, with a quarter of its war-crew, performed the duty between Belle-Isle and the continent. D'Artagnan had an opportunity of convincing himself that Porthos, though engineer and topographer, was not deeply versed in affairs of state. His perfect ignorance, with any other, might have passed for well-informed dissimulation. But D'Artagnan knew too well all the folds and refolds of his Porthos not to find a secret if there were one there; like those regular, minute old bachelors, who know how to find, with their eyes shut, each book on the shelves of their library, and each piece of linen in their wardrobe. Then, if he had found nothing, that cunning D'Artagnan, in rolling and unrolling his Porthos, it was because, in truth, there was nothing to be found.

"Be it so," said D'Artagnan; "I shall know more at Vannes in half an hour than Porthos has known at Belle-Isle in two months. Only, in order that I may know something, it is important that Porthos does not make use of the only stratagem I leave at his disposal. He must not warn Aramis of my arrival."

All the cares of the musketeer were then, for the moment, confined to the watching of Porthos. And let us hasten to say, Porthos did not deserve all this mistrust. Porthos thought of no evil. Perhaps on first seeing him, D'Artagnan had inspired him with a little suspicion; but almost

immediately D'Artagnan had reconquered in that good and brave heart the place he had always occupied, and not the least cloud darkened the large eye of Porthos, fixed from time to time with tenderness on his friend.

On landing, Porthos inquired if his horses were waiting, and he soon perceived them at the crossing of the road which turns round Sarzeau, and which, without passing through that little city, leads toward Vannes. These horses were two in number, one for M. de Vallon, and one for his equerry; for Porthos had an equerry since Mouston was only able to use a carriage as a means of locomotion. D'Artagnan expected that Porthos would propose to send forward his equerry upon one horse to bring back another horse, and he, D'Artagnan, had made up his mind to oppose this proposition. But nothing which D'Artagnan had expected happened. Porthos simply told the equerry to dismount and await his return at Sarzeau, while D'Artagnan would ride his horse; which was done.

"Eh! but you are quite a man of precaution, my dear Porthos," said D'Artagnan to his friend, when he found himself in the saddle upon the equerry's horse.

"Yes; but this is a kindness on the part of Aramis. I have not my stud here, and Aramis has placed his stables at my disposal."

"Good horses for bishop's horses, *mordioux!*" said D'Artagnan. "It is true, Aramis is a bishop of a peculiar kind."

"He is a holy man," replied Porthos, in a tone almost nasal, and with his eyes raised toward heaven.

"Then he is much changed," said D'Artagnan; "you and I have known him passably profane."

"Grace has touched him," said Porthos.

"Bravo!" said D'Artagnan. "That redoubles my desire to see my dear old friend."

And he spurred his horse, which sprung off into a more rapid pace.

"*Peste!*" said Porthos, "if we go on at this rate, we shall only take one hour instead of two."

"To go how far, do you say, Porthos?"

"Four leagues and a half."

"That will be a good pace."

"I could have embarked you on the canal, but the devil take rowers and boat-horses! The first are like tortoises, the second like snails; and when a man is able to put a good horse between his knees, that horse is better worth than rowers or any other means."

"You are right; you, above all, Porthos, who always look magnificent on horseback."

"Rather heavy, my friend; I was weighed the other day."

"And what do you weigh?"

"Three hundredweight," said Porthos proudly.

"Bravo!"

"So that you must perceive that I am forced to choose horses whose loins are straight and wide; otherwise I break them down in two hours."

"Yes, giant's horses you must have, must you not?"

"You are very polite, my friend," replied the engineer, with an affectionate majesty.

"As a case in point," replied D'Artagnan, "your horse seems to sweat already."

"*Dame!* It is hot. Ah, ah! do you see Vannes now?"

"Yes, perfectly. It is a handsome city, apparently."

"Charming, according to Aramis, at least; but I think it black; but black seems to be considered handsome by artists; I am very sorry for it."

"Why so, Porthos?"

"Because I have lately had my château of Pierrefonds, which was gray with age, plastered white."

"Humph!" said D'Artagnan, "but white is more cheerful."

"Yes, but it is less august, as Aramis tells me. Fortunately, there are dealers in black as well as white. I will have Pierrefonds replastered in black; that is the whole of it. If gray is handsome, you understand, my friend, black must be superb."

"*Dame!*" said D'Artagnan, "that appears logical."

"Were you never at Vannes, D'Artagnan?"

"Never."

"Then you know nothing of the city?"

"Nothing."

"Well, look!" said Porthos, raising himself in his stirrups, which made the fore-quarters of his horse bend sadly. "Do you see that corner, in the sun, yonder?"

"Yes, I see it plainly."

"Well, that is the cathedral."

"Which is called?"

"St. Pierre. Now look again—in the faubourg, on the left, do you see another cross?"

"Perfectly well."

"That is St. Paterne, the parish preferred by Aramis."

"Indeed!"

"Without doubt. St. Paterne, see you, passes for having been the first bishop of Vannes. It is true that Aramis pretends that he was not. But he is so learned that that may be only a paro—a para——"

"But a paradox," said D'Artagnan.

"Precisely; thank you; my tongue slips, I am so hot."

"My friend," said D'Artagnan, "continue your interesting description, I beg. What is that large white building with many windows?"

"Oh, that is the college of the Jesuits. *Pardieu!* you have a lucky hand. Do you see, close to the college, a large house with steeples, turrets, and built in a handsome Gothic style, as that brute, Monsieur Gétard, says?"

"Yes, that is plainly to be seen. Well?"

"Well, that is where Aramis resides."

"What, does he not reside at the episcopal palace?"

"No; that is in ruins. The palace likewise is in the city, and Aramis prefers the faubourgs. That is why, as I told you, he is partial to St. Paterne; St. Paterne is in the faubourg. Besides, there are in this faubourg a mall, a tennis-court, and a house of Dominicans. Look, that where the handsome steeple rises to the heavens."

"Well?"

"Next, see you, the faubourg is like a separate city; it

has its walls, its towers, its ditches; the quay is upon it likewise, and the boats land at the quay. If our corsair did not draw eight feet of water, we could have come full sail up to Aramis's windows."

"Porthos, Porthos," cried D'Artagnan, "you are a well of knowledge, a spring of ingenious and profound reflections. Porthos, you no longer surprise me, you confound me."

"Here we are arrived," said Porthos, turning the conversation with his usual modesty.

"And high time we were," thought D'Artagnan, "for Aramis's horse is melting away like a horse of ice."

They entered almost at the same instant into the faubourg; but scarcely had they gone a hundred paces when they were surprised to find the streets strewed with leaves and flowers.

Against the old walls of Vannes were hung the oldest and the strangest tapestries of France. From over balconies fell long white sheets stuck all over with bouquets. The streets were deserted; it was plain that the whole population was assembled on one point. The blinds were closed, and the breeze penetrated into the houses under the hangings, which cast long black shades between their places of issue and the walls. Suddenly, at the turning of a street, chants struck the ears of the newly arrived travelers. A crowd in holiday garb appeared through the vapors of incense which mounted to the heavens in blue flocks, and clouds of rose-leaves flew up as high as the first stories. Above all heads were to be seen the cross and banners, the sacred symbols of religion. Then, beneath these crosses and banners, as if protected by them, was a whole world of young girls clothed in white, and crowned with corn-flowers. At the two sides of the street, inclosing the *cortège,* marched the guards of the garrison, carrying bouquets in the barrels of their muskets and on the points of their lances. This was a procession. While D'Artagnan and Porthos were looking on with a fervor of good taste, which disguised an extreme impatience to get forward, a magnificent daïs approached, pre-

ceded by a hundred Jesuits and a hundred Dominicans, and escorted by two archdeacons, a treasurer, a plenipotentiary, and twelve canons. A chanter with a thundering voice—a chanter certainly picked out from all the voices of France, as was the drum-major of the Imperial guard from all the giants of the empire—a chanter escorted by four other chanters, who appeared to be there only to serve him as an accompaniment, made the air resound and the windows of all the houses vibrate. Under the dais appeared a pale and noble countenance, with black eyes, black hair streaked with threads of white, a delicate, compressed mouth, a prominent and angular chin. This head, full of graceful majesty, was covered with the episcopal miter, a head-dress which gave it, in addition to the character of sovereignty, that of asceticism and evangelic meditation.

"Aramis!" cried the musketeer involuntarily, as this lofty countenance passed before him. The prelate started at the sound of his voice. He raised his large black eyes, with their long lashes, and turned them without hesitation toward the spot whence the exclamation proceeded. At a glance, he saw Porthos and D'Artagnan close to him. On his part, D'Artagnan, thanks to the keenness of his sight, had seen all, seized all. The full portrait of the prelate had entered his memory, never to leave it. One thing had particularly struck D'Artagnan. On perceiving him, Aramis had colored, then he had concentrated under his eyelids the fire of the look of the master and the imperceptible affection of the look of the friend. It was evident that Aramis addressed this question to himself: "Why is D'Artagnan with Porthos, and what does he want at Vannes?" Aramis comprehended all that was passing in the mind of D'Artagnan, on turning his look upon him again, and seeing that he had not lowered his eyes. He knew the acuteness and intelligence of his friend; he feared to let him divine the secret of his blush and his astonishment. He was still the same Aramis, always having a secret to conceal. Therefore, to put an end to this look of an inquisitor, which it was necessary to get rid of at all events, as, at any price, a gen-

eral extinguishes a battery which annoys him, Aramis stretched forth his beautiful white hand, upon which sparkled the amethyst of the pastoral ring; he cut the air with the sign of the cross, and poured out his benediction upon his two friends. Perhaps, thoughtless and absent, D'Artagnan, impious in spite of himself, might not have bent beneath this holy benediction, but Porthos saw his distraction, and laying his friendly hand upon the back of his companion, he crushed him down toward the earth. D'Artagnan was forced to give way; indeed, he was little short of being flat on the ground. In the meantime, Aramis had passed. D'Artagnan, like Antæus, had only touched the ground, when he turned toward Porthos, almost angry. But there was no mistaking the intention of the brave Hercules; it was a feeling of religious propriety that had influenced him. Besides, speech, with Porthos, instead of disguising his thought, always completed it.

"It is very polite of him," said he, "to have given his benediction to us alone. Decidedly, he is a holy man, and a brave man."

Less convinced than Porthos, D'Artagnan made no reply.

"Observe, my friend," continued Porthos, "he has seen us; and, instead of continuing to walk on at the simple pace of the procession, as he did just now—see, what a hurry he is in; do you see how the *cortège* is increasing its speed? He is eager to join us and embrace us, is that dear Aramis."

"That is true," replied D'Artagnan, aloud. Then, to himself: "It is equally true he has seen me, the fox, and will have time to prepare himself to receive me."

But the procession had passed; the road was free. D'Artagnan and Porthos walked straight up to the episcopal palace, which was surrounded by a numerous crowd, anxious to see the prelate return. D'Artagnan remarked that this crowd was composed principally of citizens and military men. He recognized in the nature of these partisans the address of his friend. Aramis was not the man to seek for a useless popularity. He cared very little for being beloved by people who could be of no service to him. Women, chil-

dren, and old men, that is to say, the *cortège* of ordinary pastors, was not the *cortège* for him.

Ten minutes after the two friends had passed the threshold of the palace, Aramis returned like a triumphant conqueror; the soldiers presented arms to him as to a superior; the citizens bowed to him as to a friend and a patron, rather than as a head of the Church. There was something in Aramis resembling those Roman senators who had their doors always surrounded by clients. At the foot of the prison, he had a conference of half a minute with a Jesuit, who, in order to speak to him more secretly, passed his head under the daïs. He then re-entered his palace; the doors closed slowly, and the crowd melted away, while chants and prayers were still resounding abroad. It was a magnificent day. Earthly perfumes were mingled with the perfumes of the air and the sea. The city breathed happiness, joy, and strength. D'Artagnan felt something like the presence of an invisible hand which had, all-powerfully, created this strength, this joy, this happiness, and spread everywhere these perfumes.

"Oh! oh!" said he, "Porthos has got fat; but Aramis is grown taller!"

VIII

THE GRANDEUR OF THE BISHOP OF VANNES

Porthos and D'Artagnan had entered the bishop's residence by a private door, as his personal friends. Of course, Porthos served D'Artagnan as guide. The worthy baron comported himself everywhere rather as if he were at home. Nevertheless, whether it was a tacit acknowledgment of the sanctity of the personage of Aramis and his character, or the habit of respecting him who imposed upon him morally, a worthy habit which had always made Porthos a model soldier and an excellent companion; for all these reasons, say we, Porthos preserved in the palace of His

Greatness the Bishop of Vannes a sort of reserve which D'Artagnan remarked at once, in the attitude he took with respect to the valets and officers. And yet this reserve did not go so far as to prevent his asking questions. Porthos questioned. They learned that his greatness had just returned to his apartment, and was preparing to appear in familiar intimacy, less majestic than he had appeared with his flock. After a quarter of an hour, which D'Artagnan and Porthos passed in looking mutually at each other with the whites of their eyes, and turning their thumbs in all the different evolutions which go from north to south, a door of the chamber opened and his greatness appeared, dressed in the undress, complete, of a prelate. Aramis carried his head high, like a man accustomed to command; his violet robe was tucked up on one side, and his white hand was on his hip. He had retained the fine mustache and the lengthened *royale* of the time of Louis XIII. He exhaled, on entering, that delicate perfume which, among elegant men and women of high fashion, never changes, and appears to be incorporated in the person, of whom it has become the natural emanation. In this case only, the perfume had retained something of the religious sublimity of incense. It no longer intoxicated, it penetrated; it no longer inspired desire, it inspired respect. Aramis, on entering the chamber, did not hesitate an instant; and without pronouncing one word, which, whatever it might be, would have been cold on such an occasion, he went straight up to the musketeer, so well disguised under the costume of M. Agnan, and pressed him in his arms with a tenderness which the most distrustful could not have suspected of coldness or affectation.

D'Artagnan, on his part, embraced him with equal ardor. Porthos pressed the delicate hand of Aramis in his immense hands, and D'Artagnan remarked that his greatness gave him his left hand, probably from habit, seeing that Porthos already ten times had been near injuring his fingers, covered with rings, by pounding his flesh in the vise of his fist. Warned by the pain, Aramis was cautious, and only pre-

sented flesh to be bruised, and not fingers to be crushed, against gold or the angles of diamonds.

Between two embraces, Aramis looked D'Artagnan in the face, offered him a chair, sitting down himself in the shade, observing that the light fell full upon the face of his interlocutor. This maneuver, familiar to diplomatists and women, resembles much the advantage of the guard which, according to their skill or habit, combatants endeavor to take on the ground at a duel. D'Artagnan was not the dupe of this maneuver; but he did not appear to perceive it. He felt himself caught; but, precisely because he was caught, he felt himself on the road to discovery, and it little imported to him, old condottière as he was, to be beaten in appearance, provided he drew from his pretended defeat the advantages of victory. Aramis began the conversation.

"Ah! dear friend, my good D'Artagnan," said he, "what an excellent chance!"

"It is a chance, my reverend companion," said D'Artagnan, "that I will call friendship. I seek you, as I always have sought you, when I had any grand enterprise to propose to you, or some hours of liberty to give you."

"Ah, indeed," said Aramis, without explosion, "you have been seeking me?"

"Eh, yes! he has been seeking you, Aramis," said Porthos, "and the proof is that he has unharbored me at Belle-Isle. That is amiable, is it not?"

"Ah, yes!" said Aramis, "at Belle-Isle! Certainly."

"Good!" said D'Artagnan; "there is my booby Porthos, without thinking of it, has fired the first cannon of attack."

"At Belle-Isle!" said Aramis, "In that hole, in that desert! That is kind, indeed!"

"And it was I who told him you were at Vannes," continued Porthos, in the same tone.

D'Artagnan armed his mouth with a finesse almost ironical.

"Yes, I knew, but I was willing to see," replied he.

"To see what?"

"If our old friendship still held out, if, on seeing each

other, our heart, hardened as it is by age, would still let the old cry of joy escape which salutes the coming of a friend."

"Well, and you must have been satisfied," said Aramis.

"So, so."

"How is that?"

"Yes, Porthos said hush, and you——"

"Well, and I?"

"And you gave me your benediction."

"What would you have, my friend?" said Aramis, smiling; "that is the most precious thing that a poor prelate like me has to give."

"Indeed, my dear friend!"

"Doubtless."

"And yet they say at Paris that the bishopric of Vannes is one of the best in France."

"Ah! you are now speaking of temporal wealth," said Aramis, with a careless air.

"To be sure, I wish to speak of that; I hold by it, on my part."

"In that case, let me speak of it," said Aramis, with a smile.

"You own yourself to be one of the richest prelates in France?"

"My friend, since you ask me to give you an account, I will tell you that the bishopric of Vannes is worth about twenty thousand livres a year, neither more nor less. It is a diocese which contains a hundred and sixty parishes."

"That is very pretty," said D'Artagnan.

"It is superb!" said Porthos.

"And yet," resumed D'Artagnan, throwing his eyes over Aramis, "you don't mean to bury yourself here forever?"

"Pardon me. Only I do not admit the word *bury*."

"But it seems to me that at this distance from Paris a man is buried, or nearly so."

"My friend, I am getting old," said Aramis; "the noise and bustle of a city no longer suit me. At fifty-seven we ought to seek calm and meditation. I have found them here. What is there more beautiful, and stern at the same time,

than this old Armorica? I find here, dear D'Artagnan, all that is opposite to what I formerly loved, and that is what must happen at the end of life, which is opposite to the beginning. A little of my old pleasure of former times still comes to salute me here, now and then, without diverting me from the road of salvation. I am still of this world, and yet, every step that I take brings me nearer to God."

"Eloquent, wise, and discreet, you are an accomplished prelate, Aramis, and I offer you my congratulations."

"But," said Aramis, smiling, "you did not come here only for the purpose of paying me compliments. Speak: what brings you hither? May it be that, in some fashion or other, you want me?"

"Thank God, no, my friend," said D'Artagnan; "it is nothing of that kind. I am rich and free."

"Rich!" exclaimed Aramis.

"Yes, rich for me; not for you, or Porthos, understand. I have an income of about fifteen thousand livres."

Aramis looked at him suspiciously. He could not believe—particularly on seeing his friend in such humble guise—that he had made so fine a fortune. Then D'Artagnan, seeing that the hour for explanations was come, related the history of his English adventures. During the recital he saw ten times the eyes of the prelate sparkle and his slender fingers work convulsively. As to Porthos, it was not admiration he manifested for D'Artagnan; it was enthusiasm, it was delirium. When D'Artagnan had finished:

"Well!" said Aramis.

"Well," said D'Artagnan, "you see, then, I have in England friends and property, in France a treasure. If your heart tells you so, I offer them to you. That is what I came here for."

However firm was his look, he could not this time support the look of Aramis. He allowed, therefore, his eye to stray upon Porthos—like the sword which yields to too powerful a pressure, and seeks another road.

"At all events," said the bishop, "you have assumed a singular traveling costume, old friend."

"Frightful! I know it is. You may understand why I would not travel as a cavalier or a noble; since I became rich, I am miserly."

"And you say, then, you came to Belle-Isle?" said Aramis, without transition.

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan; "I knew I should find you and Porthos there."

"Find me!" cried Aramis. "Me! For the last year past I have not once crossed the sea."

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, "I should never have supposed you such a housekeeper."

"Ah, dear friend, I must tell you that I am no longer the man of former times. Riding on horseback is unpleasant to me; the sea fatigues me; I am a poor, ailing priest, always complaining, always grumbling, and inclined to the austerities which appear to accord with old age—parleys with death. I abide, my dear D'Artagnan, I abide."

"Well, that is all the better, my friend, for we shall probably become neighbors soon."

"Bah!" said Aramis, with a degree of surprise he did not even seek to dissemble. "You my neighbor?"

"*Mordioux!* yes."

"How so?"

"I am about to purchase some very profitable salt mines, which are situated between Pirial and Croisic. Imagine, my friend, a clear profit of twelve per cent. Never any deficiency, never any idle expenses; the ocean, faithful and regular, brings every six hours its contingent to my coffers. I am the first Parisian who has dreamed of such a speculation. Do not say anything about it, I beg of you, and in a short time we will communicate on the matter. I am to have three leagues of country for thirty thousand livres."

Aramis darted a look at Porthos, as if to ask if all this were true, if some snare were not concealed beneath this outward indifference. But soon, as if ashamed of having consulted this poor auxiliary, he collected all his forces for a fresh assault and a fresh defense.

"I heard that you had had some difference with the court, but that you had come out of it, as you know how to come out of everything, D'Artagnan, with the honors of war."

"I!" said the musketeer, with a burst of laughter that could not conceal his embarrassment; for, from these words, Aramis was not unlikely to be acquainted with his last relations with the king. "I! Oh, tell me all about that, pray, Aramis."

"Yes, it was related to me, a poor bishop lost in the middle of the Landes, that the king had taken you as the confidant of his amours."

"With whom?"

"With Mademoiselle de Mancini."

D'Artagnan breathed freely again.

"Ah! I don't say no to that," replied he.

"It appears that the king took you, one morning, over the bridge of Blois to talk with his lady-love."

"That's true," said D'Artagnan. "And you know that, do you? Well, then, you must know that the same day I gave in my resignation?"

"What, sincerely?"

"Nothing could be more sincere."

"It was after that, then, that you went to the Comte de la Fère's?"

"Yes."

"Afterward to me?"

"Yes."

"And then Porthos?"

"Yes."

"Was it in order to pay us a simple visit?"

"No; I did not know you were engaged, and I wished to take you with me into England."

"Yes, I understand; and then you executed alone, wonderful man as you are, what you wanted to propose to us all four to do. I suspected you had had something to do in that famous restoration when I learned that you had been seen at King Charles's receptions, and that he appeared to

treat you like a friend, or, rather, like a person to whom he was under an obligation."

"But how the devil could you learn all that?" asked D'Artagnan, who began to fear that the investigation of Aramis would extend further than he wished.

"Dear D'Artagnan," said the prelate, "my friendship resembles, in a degree, the solicitude of that night-watch whom we have in the little tower of the mole at the extremity of the quay. That brave man, every night, lights a lantern to direct the barks which come from sea. He is concealed in his sentry-box, and the fishermen do not see him; but he follows them with interest; he divines them; he calls them; he attracts them into the way to the port. I resemble this watcher. From time to time some news reaches me, and recalls to my remembrance all that I loved. Then I follow the friends of old days over the stormy ocean of the world, I, a poor watcher, to whom God has kindly given the shelter of a sentry-box."

"Well, what did I do when I came to England?"

"Ah! there," replied Aramis, "you get out of my sight. I know nothing of you since your return, D'Artagnan; my sight grows thick. I regretted you did not think of me. I wept over your forgetfulness. I was wrong. I see you again, and it is a festival, a great festival, I swear to you! How is Athos?"

"Very well, thank you."

"And our young pupil, Raoul?"

"He seems to have inherited the skill of his father, Athos, and the strength of his tutor, Porthos."

"And on what occasion have you been able to judge of that?"

"Eh! *mon Dieu!* the eve of my departure from Paris."

"Indeed! what was it?"

"Yes; there was an execution at the Grève, and, in consequence of that execution, a riot. We happened, by accident, to be in the riot; and in this riot we were obliged to have recourse to our swords. And he did wonders."

"Bah! what did he do?"

"Why, in the first place, he threw a man out of the window, as he would have thrown a bale of cotton."

"Come, that's pretty well," said Porthos.

"Then he drew, and cut and thrust away, as we fellows used to do in good old times."

"And what was the cause of this riot?" said Porthos.

D'Artagnan remarked upon the face of Aramis a complete indifference to this question of Porthos.

"Why," said he, fixing his eyes upon Aramis, "on account of two farmers of the revenues, friends of Monsieur Fouquet, whom the king forced to disgorge their plunder, and then hanged them."

A scarcely perceptible contraction of the prelate's brow showed that he had heard D'Artagnan's reply.

"Oh, oh!" said Porthos; "and what were the names of these friends of Monsieur Fouquet?"

"Messieurs d'Eymeris and Lyodot," said D'Artagnan. "Do you know those name, Aramis?"

"No," said the prelate disdainfully; "they sound like the names of financiers."

"Exactly; so they were."

"Oh! Monsieur Fouquet allows his friends to be hanged, then!" said Porthos.

"And why not?" said Aramis. "Why, it seems to me——"

"If these culprits were hanged, it was by order of the king. Now, Monsieur Fouquet, although surintendant of the finances, has not, I believe, the right of life and death."

"That may be," said Porthos; "but in the place of Monsieur Fouquet——"

Aramis was afraid Porthos was about to say something awkward, so interrupted him.

"Come, D'Artagnan," said he; "this is quite enough about other people; let us talk a little about you."

"Of me you know all that I can tell you. On the contrary, let me hear a little about you, Aramis."

"I have told you, my friend. There is nothing of Aramis left in me."

"Nor of the Abbé d'Herblay even?"

"No, not even of him. You see a man whom God has taken by the hand, whom He has conducted to a position that he could never have dared even to hope for."

"God?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes."

"Well, that is strange! I have been told it was Monsieur Fouquet."

"Who told you that?" cried Aramis, without being able, with all the power of his will, to prevent the color rising to his cheeks.

"*Ma foi!* why, Bazin."

"The fool!"

"I do not say he is a man of genius, it is true; but he told me so; and after him I repeat it to you."

"I have never seen Monsieur Fouquet," replied Aramis, with a look as pure and calm as that of a virgin who has never told a lie.

"Well, but if you have seen him and known him, there is no harm in that," replied D'Artagnan. "Monsieur Fouquet is a very good sort of a man."

"Humph!"

"A great politician."

Aramis made a gesture of indifference.

"An all-powerful minister."

"I only hold of the king and the pope."

"*Damme!* listen, then," said D'Artagnan, in the most natural tone imaginable. "I said that because everybody here swears by Monsieur Fouquet. The plain is Monsieur Fouquet's; the salt mines I am about to buy are Monsieur Fouquet's; the island in which Porthos studies topography is Monsieur Fouquet's; the garrison is Monsieur Fouquet's; the galleys are Monsieur Fouquet's. I confess, then, that nothing would have surprised me in your enfeoffment, or, rather, that of your diocese, to Monsieur Fouquet. He is another master than the king, that is all, and quite as powerful as the king."

"Thank God, I am not enfeoffed to anybody; I belong to

nobody, and am entirely my own," replied Aramis, who, during this conversation, followed with his eye every gesture of D'Artagnan, every glance of Porthos. But D'Artagnan was impassible and Porthos motionless; the thrusts aimed so skillfully were parried by an able adversary; not one hit the mark. Nevertheless, both began to feel the fatigue of such a contest, and the announcement of supper was well received by everybody. Supper changed the course of conversation. Besides, they felt that, upon their guard, as each one had been, they could neither of them boast of having the advantage. Porthos had understood nothing of what had been meant. He had held himself motionless, because Aramis had made him a sign not to stir. Supper, for him, was nothing but supper; but that was quite enough for Porthos. The supper, then, went off very well. D'Artagnan was in high spirits. Aramis exceeded himself in kind affability. Porthos eat like old Pelops. Their talk was of war, finance, the arts, and love. Aramis played astonishment at every word of politics D'Artagnan risked. This long series of surprises increased the mistrust of D'Artagnan, as the eternal indifference of D'Artagnan provoked the suspicions of Aramis. At length D'Artagnan designedly uttered the name of Colbert; he had reserved that stroke for the last.

"Who is this Colbert?" asked the bishop.

"Oh! come," said D'Artagnan to himself, "that is too strong! We must be careful, *mordioux!* we must be careful." And he then gave Aramis all the information respecting M. Colbert he could desire. The supper, or, rather, the conversation, was prolonged till one o'clock in the morning between D'Artagnan and Aramis. At ten o'clock precisely Porthos had fallen asleep in his chair, and snored like an organ. At midnight he woke up, and they sent him to bed.

"Hum!" said he, "I was near falling asleep; but that was all very interesting you were talking about."

At one o'clock Aramis conducted D'Artagnan to the chamber destined for him, which was the best in the episcopal residence. Two servants were placed at his command.

"To-morrow, at eight o'clock," said he, taking leave of D'Artagnan, "we will take, if agreeable to you, a ride on horseback with Porthos."

"At eight o'clock!" said D'Artagnan. "So late?"

"You know that I require seven hours' sleep," said Aramis.

"That is true."

"Good-night, dear friend." And he embraced the musketeer cordially.

D'Artagnan allowed him to depart; then, as soon as the door was closed:

"Good!" cried he, "at five o'clock I will be on foot."

This determination being made, he went to bed, and "folded the pieces together," as people say.

IX

IN WHICH PORTHOS BEGINS TO BE SORRY FOR HAVING COME WITH D'ARTAGNAN

Scarcely had D'Artagnan extinguished his taper, when Aramis, who had watched through his curtains the last glimmer of light in his friend's apartment, traversed the corridor on tiptoe, and went to Porthos's room. The giant, who had been in bed nearly an hour and a half, lay grandly stretched out upon the down bed. He was in that happy calm of the first sleep, which, with Porthos, resisted the noise of bells or the report of cannon; his head swam in that soft oscillation which reminds us of the soothing movement of a ship. In a moment Porthos would have begun to dream. The door of the chamber opened softly under the delicate pressure of the hand of Aramis. The bishop approached the sleeper. A thick carpet deadened the sound of his steps, besides which Porthos snored in a manner to drown all noise. He laid one hand on his shoulder:

"Rouse," said he; "wake up, my dear Porthos."

The voice of Aramis was soft and kind, but it conveyed more than a notice—it conveyed an order. His hand was light, but it indicated a danger. Porthos heard the voice and felt the hand of Aramis, even in the profoundness of his sleep. He started up.

"Who goes there?" said he, in his giant's voice.

"Hush! hush! It is I," said Aramis.

"You, my friend? And what the devil do you wake me for?"

"To tell you that you must set off directly."

"Set off?"

"Yes."

"Where for?"

"For Paris."

Porthos bounded up in his bed, and then sunk back again, fixing his great eyes in terror upon Aramis.

"For Paris?"

"Yes."

"A hundred leagues?" said he.

"A hundred and four," said the bishop.

"Oh! *mon Dieu!*" sighed Porthos, lying down again, like those children who contend with their *bonnes* to gain an hour or two more sleep.

"Thirty hours' riding," said Aramis firmly. "You know there are good relays."

Porthos pushed out one leg, allowing a groan to escape him.

"Come, come, my friend," insisted the prelate, with a sort of impatience.

Porthos drew the other leg out of the bed.

"And it is absolutely necessary that I should go?" said he.

"Urgently necessary."

Porthos got upon his feet, and began to shake both walls and floors with his steps of a marble statue.

"Hush! hush! for the love of heaven, my dear Porthos!" said Aramis, "you will wake somebody."

"Ah! that's true," replied Porthos, in a voice of thunder; "I forgot that; but be satisfied, I will observe."

And so saying, he let fall a belt loaded with his sword and pistols, and a purse, from which the crowns escaped with a vibrating and prolonged noise. This noise made the blood of Aramis boil, while it drew from Porthos a formidable burst of laughter.

"How droll that is!" said he, in the same voice.

"Not so loud, Porthos, not so loud!"

"True, true!" and he lowered his voice a half-note. "I was going to say," continued Porthos, "that it is droll that we are never so slow as when we are in a hurry, and never make so much noise as when we wish to be silent."

"Yes, that is true; but let us give the proverb the lie, Porthos; let us make haste, and hold our tongues."

"You see I am doing my best," said Porthos, putting on *haut-de-chausses*.

"Very well."

"This seems to be something in haste?"

"It is more than that, it is serious, Porthos."

"Oh, oh!"

"DArtagnan has questioned you, has he not?"

"Questioned me?"

"Yes, at Belle-Isle."

"Not the least in the world."

"Are you sure of that, Porthos?"

"*Parbleu!* It is impossible."

"Recollect yourself."

"He asked me what I was doing, and I told him—studying topography. I would have made use of another word which you employed one day."

"Of castrametation?"

"Yes, that's it; but I never could recollect it."

"All the better. What more did he ask you?"

"Who Monsieur Gétard was."

"Next?"

"Who Monsieur Jupenet was."

"He did not happen to see our plan of fortifications, did he?"

"Yes."

"The devil he did!"

"But don't be alarmed, I had rubbed out your writing with India-rubber. It was impossible for him to suppose you had given me any advice in those works."

"Ay; but our friend has very keen eyes."

"What are you afraid of?"

"I fear that everything is discovered, Porthos; the matter is, then, to prevent a great misfortune. I have given orders to my people to close all the gates and doors. D'Artagnan will not be able to get out before daybreak. Your horse is ready saddled; you will gain the first relay; by five o'clock in the morning you will have gone fifteen leagues. Come!"

Aramis then assisted Porthos to dress, piece by piece, with as much celerity as the most skillful *valet de chambre* could have done. Porthos, half confused, half stupefied, let him do as he liked, and confounded himself in excuses. When he was ready, Aramis took him by the hand, and led him, making him place his foot with precaution on every step of the stairs, preventing him running against door-frames, turning him this way and that, as if Aramis had been the giant and Porthos the dwarf. Soul set fire to and elevated matter. A horse was waiting, ready saddled, in the court-yard. Porthos mounted. Then Aramis himself took the horse by the bridle, and led him over some dung spread in the yard, with the evident intention of suppressing noise. He, at the same time, pinched the horse's nose, to prevent him neighing. When arrived at the outward gate, drawing Porthos toward him, who was going off without even asking him what for:

"Now, friend Porthos, now, without drawing bridle till you get to Paris," whispered he in his ear; "eat on horseback, drink on horseback, sleep on horseback, but lose not a minute."

"That's enough; I will not stop."

"This letter to Monsieur Fouquet; cost what it may, he must have it to-morrow before midday."

"He shall have it."

"And do not forget one thing, my friend."

"What is that?"

"That you are riding after your *brevet* of *duc* and peer."

"Oh! oh!" said Porthos, with his eyes sparkling; "I will do it in twenty-four hours, in that case."

"Try to do so."

"Then let go the bridle—and forward, Goliath!"

Aramis did let go, not the bridle, but the horse's nose. Porthos released his hand, clapped spurs to his horse, which set off at a gallop. As long as he could distinguish Porthos through the darkness, Aramis followed him with his eyes; when he was completely out of sight, he re-entered the yard. Nothing had stirred in D'Artagnan's apartment. The valet placed on watch at the door had neither seen any light nor heard any noise. Aramis closed his door carefully, sent the lackey to bed, and quickly sought his own. D'Artagnan really suspected nothing, therefore thought he had gained everything when he awoke in the morning about half-past four. He ran to the window in his shirt. The window looked out upon the court. Day was dawning. The court was deserted; the fowls, even, had not left their roosts. Not a servant appeared. All the doors were closed.

"Good! perfect calm," said D'Artagnan to himself. "Never mind; I am up first in the house. Let us dress; that will be so much done."

And D'Artagnan dressed himself. But, this time, he endeavored not to give to the costume of M. Agnan that *bourgeois* and almost ecclesiastical rigidity he had affected before; he managed, by drawing his belt tighter, by buttoning his clothes in a different fashion, and by putting on his hat a little on one side, to restore to his person a little of that military character, the absence of which had surprised Aramis. This being done, he made free, or affected to make free, with his host, and entered his chamber without ceremony. Aramis was asleep, or feigned to be asleep. A large book lay open upon his night-desk, a wax-light was still burning above its silver plateau. This was more than enough to prove to D'Artagnan the innocence of the night

of the prelate and the good intentions of his waking. The musketeer did to the bishop precisely as the bishop had done to Porthos—he tapped him on the shoulder. Evidently Aramis pretended to sleep; for, instead of waking suddenly, he who slept so lightly, he required a repetition of the summons.

"Ah! ah! is that you?" said he, stretching his arms. "What an agreeable surprise! *Ma foi!* Sleep had made me forget I had the happiness to possess you. What o'clock is it?"

"I do not know," said D'Artagnan, a little embarrassed. "Early, I believe. But you know, that devil of a habit of waking with the day sticks to me still."

"Do you wish that we should go out so soon?" asked Aramis. "It appears to me to be very early."

"Just as you like."

"I thought we had agreed not to get on horseback before eight."

"Possibly; but I have so great a wish to see that I said to myself, the sooner the better."

"And my seven hours' sleep," said Aramis; "take care, I had reckoned upon them, and what I lose of them I must make up."

"But it seems to me that, formerly, you were less of a sleeper than that, dear friend; your blood was alive, and you were never to be found in bed."

"And it is exactly on account of what you tell me that I am so fond of being there now."

"Then you confess that it is not for the sake of sleeping that you have put me off till eight o'clock?"

"I have been afraid you would laugh at me if I told you the truth."

"Tell me, notwithstanding."

"Well, from six to eight I am accustomed to perform my devotions."

"Your devotions?"

"Yes."

"I did not believe a bishop's exercises were so severe."

"A bishop, my friend, must sacrifice more to appearances than a simple clerk."

"*Mordioux!* Aramis, that is a word which reconciles me with your greatness. To appearances! That is a musketeer's word, in good truth. *Vivent les apparances!* Aramis."

"Instead of felicitating me upon it, pardon me, D'Artagnan. It is a very mundane word which I had allowed to escape me."

"Must I leave you, then?"

"I want time to collect my thoughts, my friend, and for my usual prayers."

"Well, I leave you to them; but on account of that poor pagan, D'Artagnan, abridge them for once, I beg; I thirst for speech of you."

"Well, D'Artagnan, I promise you that within an hour and a half——"

"An hour and half of devotions! Ah! my friend, be as reasonable with me as you can. Let me have the best bargain possible."

Aramis began to laugh.

"Still agreeable, still young, still gay," said he. "You have come into my diocese to set me quarreling with grace."

"Bah!"

"And you know well that I was never able to resist your seductions; you will cost me my salvation, D'Artagnan."

D'Artagnan bit his lips.

"Well," said he, "I will take the sin on my own head; favor me with one simple Christian sign of the cross, favor me with one Pater, and we will part."

"Hush!" said Aramis, "we are already no longer alone; I hear strangers coming up."

"Well, dismiss them."

"Impossible; I made an appointment with them yesterday; it is the principal of the college of the Jesuits and the superior of the Dominicans."

"Your staff? Well, so be it!"

"What are you going to do?"

"I will go and wake Porthos, and remain in his company till you have finished the conference."

Aramis did not stir, his brow remained unbent, he betrayed himself by no gesture or word. "Go," said he, as D'Artagnan advanced to the door.

"Apropos, do you know where Porthos sleeps?"

"No; but I can inquire."

"Take the corridor, and open the second door on the left."

"Thank you! *au revoir.*" And D'Artagnan departed in the direction pointed out by Aramis.

Ten minutes had not passed away when he came back. He found Aramis seated between the superior of the Dominicans and the principal of the college of the Jesuits, exactly in the same situation as he had found him formerly in the auberge at Crèvecœur. This company did not at all terrify the musketeer.

"What is it?" said Aramis quietly. "You have, apparently, something to say to me, my friend."

"It is," replied D'Artagnan, fixing his eyes upon Aramis, "it is that Porthos is not in his apartment."

"Indeed," said Aramis calmly; "are you sure?"

"*Pardieu!* I came from his chamber."

"Where can he be, then?"

"That is what I ask you."

"And have not you inquired?"

"Yes, I have."

"And what answer did you get?"

"That Porthos, often going out in a morning, without saying anything, was probably gone out."

"What did you do, then?"

"I went to the stables," replied D'Artagnan carelessly.

"What to do?"

"To see if Porthos was gone out on horseback."

"And?" interrogated the bishop.

"Well, there is a horse missing; stall No. 3, Goliath."

All this dialogue, it may be easily understood, was not exempt from a certain affectation on the part of the musketeer and a perfect complaisance on the part of Aramis.

"Oh! I guess how it is," said Aramis, after having considered for a moment; "Porthos is gone out to give us a surprise."

"A surprise?"

"Yes; the canal which goes from Vannes to the sea abounds in teal and snipe; that is Porthos's favorite sport, and he will bring us back a dozen for breakfast."

"Do you think so?" said D'Artagnan.

"I am sure of it. Where else can he be? I would lay a wager he took a gun with him."

"Well, that is possible," said D'Artagnan.

"Do one thing, my friend. Get on horseback and join him."

"You are right," said D'Artagnan, "I will."

"Shall I go with you?"

"No, thank you; Porthos is rather remarkable; I will inquire as I go along."

"Will you take an arquebuse?"

"Thank you."

"Order what horse you like to be saddled."

"The one I rode yesterday, on coming from Belle-Isle."

"So be it; use the horse as your own."

Aramis rang, and gave orders to have the horse M. d'Artagnan had chosen saddled.

D'Artagnan followed the servant charged with the execution of this order. When arrived at the door, the servant drew on one side to allow M. d'Artagnan to pass, and at that moment he caught the eye of his master. A knitting of the brow gave the intelligent spy to understand that all should be given to D'Artagnan he wished. D'Artagnan got into the saddle, and Aramis heard the steps of his horse on the pavement. An instant after, the servant returned.

"Well?" asked the bishop.

"Monseigneur, he has followed the course of the canal, and is going toward the sea," said the servant.

"Very well!" said Aramis.

In fact, D'Artagnan, dismissing all suspicion, hastened toward the ocean, constantly hoping to see in the Landes,

or on the beach, the colossal profile of Porthos. He persisted in fancying he could trace a horse's steps in every puddle. Sometimes he imagined he heard the report of a gun. This illusion lasted three hours; during two of them he went forward in search of his friend, in the last he returned to the house.

"We must have crossed," said he, "and I shall find them waiting for me at table."

D'Artagnan was mistaken. He no more found Porthos at the palace than he had found him on the seashore. Aramis was waiting for him at the top of the stairs, looking very much concerned.

"Did my people not find you, my dear D'Artagnan?" cried he, as soon as he caught sight of the musketeer.

"No; did you send anyone after me?"

"I am deeply concerned, my friend, deeply, to have induced you to make such a useless search; but about seven o'clock the almoner of St. Paterne came here. He had met Du Valon, who was going away, and who, being unwilling to disturb anybody at the palace, had charged him to tell me that, fearing Monsieur Gétard would play him some ill turn in his absence, he was going to take advantage of the morning tide to make a tour to Belle-Isle."

"But tell me; Goliath has not crossed the four leagues of the sea, I should think."

"There are full six," said Aramis.

"That makes it less probable still."

"Therefore, my friend," said Aramis, with one of his most bland smiles, "Goliath is in the stable, well pleased, I will answer for it, that Porthos is no longer on his back." In fact, the horse had been brought back from the relay by the direction of the prelate, from whom no detail escaped. D'Artagnan appeared as well satisfied as possible with the explanation. He entered upon a part of dissimulation which agreed perfectly with the suspicions that arose more and more strongly in his mind. He breakfasted between the Jesuit and Aramis, having the Dominican in front of him, and smiling particularly at the Dominican, whose jolly fat

face pleased him much. The repast was long and sumptuous; excellent Spanish wine, fine Morbitran oysters, exquisite fish from the mouth of the Loire, enormous prawns from Paimbœuf, and delicious game from the moors, constituted the principal part of it. D'Artagnan eat much and drank but little. Aramis drank nothing, unless it was water. After the repast:

"You offered me an arquebuse," said D'Artagnan.

"I did."

"Lend it me, then."

"Are you going shooting?"

"While waiting for Porthos, it is the best thing I can do, I think."

"Take which you like from the trophy."

"Will you not come with me?"

"I would with great pleasure; but, alas! my friend, sporting is forbidden to bishops."

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, "I did not know that."

"Besides," continued Aramis, "I shall be busy till midday."

"I shall go alone, then?" said D'Artagnan.

"I am sorry to say you must; but come back to dinner."

"*Pardieu!* the eating at your house is too grand to make me think of not coming back." And thereupon D'Artagnan quitted his host, bowed to the guests, and took his arquebuse; but, instead of shooting, went straight to the little port of Vannes. He looked in vain to observe if anybody saw him; he could discern neither thing nor person. He engaged a little fishing-boat for twenty-five livres, and set off at half past eleven, convinced that he had not been followed; and that was true, he had not been followed; only a Jesuit brother, placed in the top of the steeple of his church, had not, since the morning, by the help of an excellent glass, lost sight of one of his steps. At three-quarters past eleven, Aramis was informed that D'Artagnan was sailing toward Belle-Isle. The voyage was rapid; a good north-northeast wind drove him toward the isle. As he approached, his eyes were constantly fixed upon the coast. He looked to see if,

upon the shore or upon the fortifications, the brilliant dress and vast stature of Porthos should stand out against a slightly clouded sky; but his search was in vain. He landed without having seen anything, and learned from the first soldier interrogated by him that M. du Valon was not yet returned from Vannes. Then, without losing an instant, D'Artagnan ordered his little bark to put its head toward Sarzeau. We know that the wind changes with the different hours of the day. The wind had gone round from the north-northeast to the southeast; the wind, then, was almost as good for the return to Sarzeau as it had been for the voyage to Belle-Isle. In three hours D'Artagnan had touched the continent; two hours more sufficed for his ride to Vannes. In spite of the rapidity of his passage, what D'Artagnan endured of impatience and anger during that short passage, the deck alone of the vessel, upon which he stamped backward and forward for three hours, could relate to history. He made but one bound from the quay whereon he landed to the episcopal palace. He thought to terrify Aramis by the promptitude of his return; he wished to reproach him with his duplicity, and yet with reserve, but with sufficient spirit, nevertheless, to make him feel all the consequences of it, and force from him a part of his secret. He hoped, in short—thanks to that heat of expression which is to mysteries what the charge with the bayonet is to redoubts—to bring the mysterious Aramis to some manifestation or other. But he found, in the vestibule of the palace, the *valet de chambre,* who closed the passage, while smiling upon him with a stupid air.

"Monseigneur?" cried D'Artagnan, endeavoring to put him aside with his hand. Moved for an instant, the valet resumed his station.

"Monseigneur?" said he.

"Yes, to be sure; do you know me, *imbécile?*"

"Yes, you are the Chevalier d'Artagnan."

"Then let me pass."

"It is of no use."

"Why of no use?"

"Because his greatness is not at home."

"What! his greatness is not at home? Where is he, then?"

"Gone."

"Gone?"

"Yes."

"Whither?"

"I don't know; but perhaps he tells Monsieur le Chevalier."

"And how? where? in what fashion?"

"In this letter, which he gave me for Monsieur le Chevalier." And the *valet de chambre* drew a letter from his pocket.

"Give it me, then, you rascal," said D'Artagnan, snatching it from his hand. "Oh, yes," continued he, at the first line, "yes, I understand"; and he read:

"DEAR FRIEND: An affair of the most urgent nature calls me to a distant parish of my diocese. I hoped to see you again before I set out; but I lose that hope in thinking that you are going, no doubt, to remain two or three days at Belle-Isle, with our dear Porthos. Amuse yourself as well as you can; but do not attempt to hold out against him at table. This is a counsel I might have given even to Athos, in his most brilliant and best days. Adieu, dear friend; believe that I regret greatly not having better, and for a longer time, profited by your excellent company."

"*Mordioux!*" cried D'Artagnan. "I am tricked. Ah! blockhead, brute, triple fool that I am! But let them laugh who laugh last. Oh, duped, duped, like a monkey cheated with an empty nutshell!" And with a hearty blow bestowed upon the nose of the still grinning *valet de chambre,* he made all haste out of the episcopal palace. Furet, however good a trotter, was not equal to present circumstances. D'Artagnan, therefore, took the post, and chose a horse, which he made to understand, with good spurs and a light hand, that stags are not the most agile creatures in nature.

X

IN WHICH D'ARTAGNAN MAKES ALL SPEED, PORTHOS SNORES, AND ARAMIS COUNSELS

From thirty to thirty-five hours after the events we have just related, as M. Fouquet, according to his custom, having interdicted his door, was working in the cabinet of his house at St. Mandé, with which we are already acquainted, a carriage, drawn by four horses streaming with sweat, entered the court at full gallop. This carriage was probably expected; for three or four lackeys hastened to the door, which they opened. While M. Fouquet rose from his bureau and ran to the window, a man got painfully out of the carriage, descending with difficulty the three steps of the door, leaning upon the shoulders of his lackeys. He had scarcely uttered his name, when the valet upon whom he was not leaning sprung up the *perron,* and disappeared in the vestibule. This man went to inform his master; but he had no occasion to knock at the door; Fouquet was standing on the threshold.

"Monseigneur, the Bishop of Vannes," said he.

"Very well!" replied his master.

Then, leaning over the baluster of the staircase, of which Aramis was beginning to ascend the first steps:

"You, dear friend!" said he, "you, so soon!"

"Yes; I myself, monsieur; but bruised, battered, as you see."

"Oh! my poor dear friend," said Fouquet, presenting him his arm, upon which Aramis leaned, while the servants drew back with respect.

"Bah!" replied Aramis, "it is nothing, since I am here; the principal thing was that I should get here, and here I am."

"Speak quickly," said Fouquet, closing the door of the cabinet behind Aramis and himself.

"Are we alone?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"No one can listen to us? no one can hear us?"

"Be satisfied; nobody."

"Is Monsieur du Valon arrived?"

"Yes."

"And you have received my letter?"

"Yes. The affair is serious, apparently, since it necessitates your presence in Paris, at a moment when your presence was so urgent elsewhere."

"You are right; it cannot be more serious."

"Thank you! thank you! What is it about? But, for God's sake! before anything else, take time to breathe, dear friend. You are so pale, you frighten me."

"I am really in great pain. But, for Heaven's sake, think nothing about me. Did Monsieur du Valon tell you nothing when he delivered the letter to you?"

"No. I heard a great noise; I went to the window; I saw at the foot of the *perron* a sort of horseman of marble; I went down, he held the letter out to me, and his horse fell down dead."

"But he?"

"He fell with the horse; he was lifted up, and carried to an apartment. Having read the letter, I went up to him, in hopes of obtaining more ample information; but he was asleep, and, after such a fashion, that it was impossible to wake him. I took pity on him; I gave orders that his boots should be taken off, and that he should be left quite undisturbed."

"So far well; now, this is the question in hand, monseigneur. You have seen Monsieur d'Artagnan in Paris, have you not?"

"*Certes,* and think him a man of intelligence, and even a man of heart, although he did bring about the death of our dear friends, Lyodot and D'Eymeris."

"Alas! yes, I heard of that. At Tours I met the courier who was bringing me the letter from Gourville and the dispatches from Pallisson. Have you seriously reflected on that event, monsieur?"

"Yes."

"And in it you perceived a direct attack upon your sovereignty?"

"And do you believe it to be so?"

"Oh, yes, I think so."

"Well, I must confess, that sad idea occurred to me likewise."

"Do not blind yourself, monsieur, in the name of Heaven! Listen attentively to me. I return to D'Artagnan."

"I am all attention."

"Under what circumstances did you see him?"

"He came here for money."

"With what kind of order?"

"With an order from the king."

"Direct?"

"Signed by his majesty."

"There, then! Well, D'Artagnan has been to Belle-Isle; he was disguised; he came in the character of some sort of an intendant, charged by his master to purchase salt mines. Now, D'Artagnan has no other master but the king; he came, then, sent by the king. He saw Porthos."

"Who is Porthos?"

"I beg your pardon, I made a mistake. He saw Monsieur du Valon at Belle-Isle; and he knows, as well as you and I do, that Belle-Isle is fortified."

"And you think that the king sent him there?" said Fouquet pensively.

"I certainly do."

"And D'Artagnan, in the hands of the king, is a dangerous instrument?"

"The most dangerous imaginable."

"Then I formed a correct opinion of him at the first glance."

"How so?"

"I wished to attach him to myself."

"If you judged him to be the bravest, the most acute, and the most adroit man in France, you have judged correctly."

"He must be had, then, at any price."

"D'Artagnan?"

"Is not that your opinion?"

"It may be my opinion, but you will never have him."

"Why?"

"Because we have allowed the time to go by. He was dissatisfied with the court, we should have profited by that; since that, he has passed into England; there he powerfully assisted in the Restoration, there he gained a fortune, and, after all, he returned to the service of the king. Well, if he has returned to the service of the king, it is because he has been well paid in that service."

"We will pay him still better, that is all."

"Oh, monsieur! excuse me; D'Artagnan has a high sense of his word, and where that word is once engaged, that word remains where it is."

"What do you conclude, then?" said Fouquet, with great inquietude.

At present, the principal thing is to parry a dangerous blow

And how is it to be parried?"

"Listen."

"But D'Artagnan will come and render an account to the king of his mission."

"Oh, we have time enough to think about that."

"How so? You are much in advance of him, I presume?"

"Nearly ten hours."

"Well, in ten hours——"

Aramis shook his pale head. "Look at these clouds which flit across the heavens, at these swallows which cut the air. D'Artagnan moves more quickly than the clouds or the birds; D'Artagnan is the wind which carries them."

"A strange man!"

"I tell you, he is something superhuman, monsieur. He is of my age, and I have known him these five-and-thirty years."

"Well?"

"Well, listen to my calculation, monsieur. I sent Mon-

sieur du Valon off to you two hours after midnight. Monsieur du Valon was eight hours in advance of me; when did Monsieur du Valon arrive?"

"About four hours ago."

"You see, then, that I gained four upon him; and yet Porthos is a stanch horseman, and he has left on the road eight dead horses, whose bodies I came to successively. I rode post fifty leagues; but I have the gout, the gravel, and what else I know not; so that fatigue kills me. I was obliged to dismount at Tours; since that, rolling along in a carriage, half dead, sometimes overturned, often drawn upon the sides, and sometimes on the back of a carriage, always with four spirited horses at full gallop, I have arrived—arrived, gaining four hours upon Porthos; but, see you, D'Artagnan does not weigh three hundredweight, as Porthos does; D'Artagnan has not the gout and the gravel, as I have; he is not a horseman, he is a centaur. D'Artagnan, see you, set out for Belle-Isle when I set out for Paris; and D'Artagnan, notwithstanding my ten hours' advance, D'Artagnan will arrive within two hours after me."

"But, then, accidents?"

"He never meets with any accidents."

"Horses may fail him."

"He will run as fast as a horse."

"Good God! what a man!"

"Yes, he is a man whom I love and admire. I love him because he is good, great, and loyal; I admire him because he represents with me the culminating point of human powers; but, while loving and admiring him, I fear him, and am on my guard against him. Now, then, I resume, monsieur; in two hours D'Artagnan will be here; be beforehand with him. Go to the Louvre, and see the king before he sees D'Artagnan."

"What shall I say to the king?"

"Nothing; give him Belle-Isle."

"Oh! Monsieur d'Herblay! Monsieur d'Herblay!" cried Fouquet, "what projects crushed all at once!"

"After one project that has failed, there is always an-

other project which may lead to good; we should never despair. Go, monsieur, and go quickly."

"But that garrison, so carefully chosen, the king will change it directly."

"That garrison, monsieur, was the king's when it entered Belle-Isle; it is yours now; it will be the same with all garrisons after a fortnight's occupation. Let things go on, monsieur. Do you see any inconvenience in having an army at the end of a year, instead of two regiments? Do you not see that your garrison of to-day will make you partisans at La Rochelle, Nantes, Bordeaux, Toulouse—in short, wherever they may be sent to? Go to the king, monsieur, go; time flies, and D'Artagnan, while we are losing time, is flying like an arrow along the highroad."

"Monsieur d'Herblay, you know that each word from you is a germ which fructifies in my thoughts. I will go to the Louvre."

"Instantly, will you not?"

"I only ask time to change my dress."

"Remember that D'Artagnan has no need to pass through St. Mandé, but will go straight to the Louvre; that is cutting off an hour from the advance which remains to us."

"D'Artagnan may have everything except my English horses. I shall be at the Louvre in twenty-five minutes." And, without losing a second, Fouquet gave orders for his departure.

Aramis had only time to say to him, "Return as quickly as you go; for I shall await you impatiently."

Five minutes after, the surintendant was flying along the road to Paris. During this time, Aramis desired to be shown the chamber in which Porthos was sleeping. At the door of Fouquet's cabinet he was folded in the arms of Pellisson, who had just heard of his arrival, and had left his office to see him. Aramis received, with that friendly dignity which he knew so well how to assume, those caresses as respectful as earnest; but, all at once stopping on the landing-place, "What is that I hear up yonder?"

There was, in fact, a hoarse, growling kind of noise, like

the roar of a hungry tiger or an impatient lion. "Oh, that is nothing," said Pellisson, smiling.

"Well; but——"

"It is Monsieur du Valon snoring."

"Ah! true," said Aramis; "I had forgotten. No one but he is capable of making such a noise. Allow me, Pellisson, to inquire if he wants anything."

"And you will permit me to accompany you?"

"Oh, certainly." And both entered the chamber. Porthos was stretched upon the bed; his face was violet rather than red; his eyes were swelled; his mouth was wide open. The roaring which escaped from the deep cavities of his chest made the glass of the windows vibrate. To those developed and clearly defined muscles starting from his face, to his hair matted with sweat, to the energetic heaving of his chin and shoulders, it was impossible to refuse a certain degree of admiration. Strength carried to this point is almost divinity. The Herculean legs and feet of Porthos had, by swelling, burst his leather boots; all the strength of his enormous body was converted into the rigidity of stone. Porthos moved no more than does the giant of granite which reclines upon the plains of Agrigentum. According to Pellisson's orders, his boots had been cut off, for no human power could have pulled them off. Four lackeys had tried in vain, pulling at them as they would have pulled capstans; and yet all this did not awaken him. They had taken off his boots in fragments, and his legs had fallen back upon the bed. They then cut off the rest of his clothes, carried him to a bath, in which they let him lie a considerable time. They then put on him clean linen, and placed him in a well-warmed bed—the whole with efforts and pains which might have roused a dead man, but which did not make Porthos open an eye, or interrupt for a second the formidable organ of his snoring. Aramis wished, on his part, with a dry, nervous nature, armed with extraordinary courage, to outbrave fatigue, and employ himself with Gourville and Pellisson, but he fainted in the chair, in which he had persisted to remain. He was carried into

the adjoining room, where the repose of bed soon calmed his throbbing brain.

XI

IN WHICH MONSIEUR FOUQUET ACTS

In the meantime, Fouquet was hastening to the Louvre at the best speed of his English horses. The king was at work with Colbert. All at once the king became thoughtful. The two sentences of death he had signed on mounting his throne sometimes recurred to his memory; they were two black spots which he saw with his eyes open; two spots of blood which he saw when his eyes were closed. "Monsieur," said he, rather sharply, to the intendant; "it sometimes seems to me that those two men you made me condemn were not very great culprits."

"Sire, they were picked out from the herd of the farmers of the financiers, which wanted decimating."

"Picked out by whom?"

"By necessity, sire," replied Colbert coldly.

"Necessity! a great word," murmured the young king.

"A great goddess, sire."

"They were devoted friends of the surintendant, were they not?"

"Yes, sire; friends who would have given their lives to Monsieur Fouquet."

"They have given them, monsieur," said the king.

"That is true; but uselessly, by good luck, which was not their intention."

"How much money had these men fraudulently obtained?"

"Ten millions, perhaps; of which six have been confiscated."

"And is that money in my coffers?" said the king, with a certain air of repugnance.

"It is there, sire; but this confiscation, while threatening Monsieur Fouquet, has not touched him."

"You conclude, then, Monsieur Colbert——"

"That if Monsieur Fouquet has raised against your majesty a troop of factious rioters to extricate his friends from punishment, he will raise an army when he shall have to extricate himself from punishment."

The king darted at his confidant one of those looks which resemble the red fire of a stormy flash of lightning, one of those looks which illuminate the darkness of the deepest consciences. "I am astonished," said he, "that, thinking such things of Monsieur Fouquet, you did not come to give me your counsels thereupon."

"Counsels upon what, sire?"

"Tell me, in the first place, clearly and precisely, what you think, Monsieur Colbert."

"Upon what subject, sire?"

"Upon the conduct of Monsieur Fouquet."

"I think, sire, that Monsieur Fouquet, not satisfied with attracting all the money to himself, as Monsieur Mazarin did, and by that means depriving your majesty of one part of your power, still wishes to attract to himself all the friends of easy life and pleasures—of what idlers call poetry, and politicians, corruption. I think that, by holding the subjects of your majesty in pay, he trespasses upon the royal prerogative, and cannot, if this continues so, be long in placing your majesty among the weak and obscure."

"How would you qualify all these projects, Monsieur Colbert?"

"The projects of Monsieur Fouquet, sire?"

"Yes."

"They are called crimes of *lèse majesté.*"

"And what is done to criminals guilty of *lèse majesté?*"

"They are arrested, tried, and punished."

"You are quite sure that Monsieur Fouquet has conceived the idea of the crime you impute to him?"

"I can say more, sire; there is even a commencement of the execution of it."

"Well, then, I return to that which I was saying, Monsieur Colbert."

"And you were saying, sire?"

"Give me counsel."

"Pardon me, sire; but, in the first place, I have something to add."

"Say—what?"

"An evident, palpable, material proof of treason."

"And what is that?"

"I have just learned that Monsieur Fouquet is fortifying Belle-Isle."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Yes, sire."

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly. Do you know, sire, what soldiers there are at Belle-Isle?"

"No, *ma foi!* Do you?"

"I am ignorant likewise, sire; I should therefore propose to your majesty to send somebody to Belle-Isle."

"Who?"

"Me, for instance."

"And what would you do at Belle-Isle?"

"Inform myself whether, after the example of the ancient feudal lords, Monsieur Fouquet was embattlementing his walls."

"And with what purpose could he do that?"

"With the purpose of defending himself some day against his king."

"But, if it be thus, Monsieur Colbert," said Louis, "we must immediately do as you say: Monsieur Fouquet must be arrested."

"That is impossible."

"I thought I had already told you, monsieur, that I suppressed that word in my service."

"The service of your majesty cannot prevent Monsieur Fouquet from being surintendant-general."

"Well?"

"That, in consequence of holding that post, he has for him all the parliament, as he has all the army by his lar-

gesses, all literature by his favors, and all the *noblesse* by his presents."

"That is to say, then, that I can do nothing against Monsieur Fouquet?"

"Absolutely nothing—at least, at present, sire."

"You are a sterile counselor, Monsieur Colbert."

"Oh, no, sire; for I will not confine myself to pointing out the peril to your majesty."

"Come, then, where shall we begin to undermine the Colossus; let us see"; and his majesty began to laugh with bitterness.

"He has grown great by money; kill him by money, sire."

"If I were to deprive him of his charge?"

"A bad means, sire."

"The good—the good, then?"

"Ruin him, sire; that is the way."

"But how?"

"Occasions will not be wanting; take advantage of all occasions."

"Point them out to me."

"Here is one at once. His Royal Highness Monsieur is about to be married; his nuptials must be magnificent. That is a good occasion for your majesty to demand a million of Monsieur Fouquet. Monsieur Fouquet, who pays twenty thousand livres down, when he need not pay more than five thousand, will easily find that million when your majesty shall demand it."

"That is all very well; I will demand it," said Louis.

"If your majesty will sign the *ordonnance,* I will have the money taken myself." And Colbert pushed a paper before the king, and presented a pen to him.

At that moment the usher opened the door and announced Monsieur le Surintendant. Louis turned pale. Colbert let the pen fall, and drew back from the king, over whom he extended his black wings of a bad angel. The surintendant made his entrance like a man of the court, to whom a single glance was sufficient to make him appreciate his situation. That situation was not very encouraging for Fouquet, what-

ever might be the consciousness of his strength. The small black eye of Colbert, dilated by envy, and the limpid eye of Louis XIV, inflamed by anger, signaled a pressing danger. Courtiers are, with regard to court rumors, like old soldiers, who distinguish through blasts of wind and moaning of leaves the sound of the distant step of an armed troop. They can, after having listened, tell pretty nearly how many men are marching, how many arms resound, how many cannons roll. Fouquet had, then, only to interrogate the silence which his arrival had produced; he found it big with menacing revelations. The king allowed him quite time enough to advance as far as the middle of the chamber. His adolescent modesty commanded this forbearance of the moment. Fouquet boldly seized the opportunity.

"Sire," said he, "I was impatient to see your majesty."

"What for?" asked Louis.

"To announce some good news to you."

Colbert, in grandeur of person, less largeness of heart, resembled Fouquet in many points. The same penetration, the same knowledge of men. Moreover, that great power of contraction which gives to hypocrites time to reflect, and gather themselves up to take a spring. He guessed that Fouquet was going to meet the blow he was about to deal him. His eyes sparkled.

"What news?" asked the king. Fouquet placed a roll of papers on the table.

"Let your majesty have the goodness to cast your eyes over this work," said he. The king slowly unfolded the paper.

"Plans?" said he.

"Yes, sire."

"And what are these plans?"

"A new fortification, sire."

"Ah, ah!" said the king. "You amuse yourself with tactics and strategies then, Monsieur Fouquet?"

"I occupy myself with everything that may be useful to the reign of your majesty," replied Fouquet.

"Beautiful descriptions!" said the king, looking at the design.

"Your majesty comprehends, without doubt," said Fouquet, bending over the paper; "here is the circle of the walls, here are the forts, there the advanced works."

"And what do I see here, monsieur?"

"The sea."

"The sea all around?"

"Yes, sire."

"And what is, then, this place of which you show me the plan?"

"Sire, it is Belle-Isle-en-Mer," replied Fouquet, with simplicity.

At this word, at this name, Colbert made so marked a movement that the king turned round to enforce the necessity for reserve. Fouquet did not appear to be the least in the world concerned by the movement of Colbert or the king's signal.

"Monsieur," continued Louis, "you have then fortified Belle-Isle?"

"Yes, sire; and I have brought the plan and the accounts to your majesty," replied Fouquet. "I have expended sixteen hundred thousand livres in this operation."

"What to do?" replied Louis coldly, having taken the initiative from a malicious look of the intendant.

"For an aim very easy to seize," replied Fouquet. "Your majesty was on cool terms with Great Britain."

"Yes; but since the restoration of King Charles II, I have formed an alliance with him."

"A month since, sire, your majesty has truly said; but it is more than six months since the fortifications of Belle-Isle have been begun."

"Then they have become useless."

"Sire, fortifications are never useless. I fortified Belle-Isle against Messieurs Monk and Lambert, and all those London citizens who were playing at soldiers. Belle-Isle will be ready fortified against the Dutch, against whom either England or your majesty cannot fail to make war."

The king was again silent, and looked under at Colbert.

"Belle-Isle, I believe," added Louis, "is yours, Monsieur Fouquet?"

"No, sire."

"Whose then?"

"Your majesty's."

Colbert was seized with as much terror as if a gulf had opened beneath his feet. Louis started with admiration, either at the genius or the devotion of Fouquet.

"Explain yourself, monsieur," said he.

"Nothing more easy, sire. Belle-Isle is one of my estates. I have fortified it at my own expense. But as nothing in the world can oppose a subject making an humble present to his king, I offer your majesty the proprietorship of the estate, of which you will leave me the usufruct. Belle-Isle, as a place of war, ought to be occupied by the king. Your majesty will be able, henceforth, to keep a safe garrison there."

Colbert felt almost sinking down upon the floor. To keep himself from falling, he was obliged to hold by the columns of the wainscoting.

"This is a piece of great skill in the art of war that you have exhibited here, monsieur," said Louis.

"Sire, the initiative did not come from me," replied Fouquet; "many officers have inspired me with it. The plans themselves have been made by one of the most distinguished engineers."

"His name?"

"Monsieur du Valon."

"Monsieur du Valon?" resumed Louis. "I do not know him. It is much to be lamented, Monsieur Colbert," continued he, "that I do not know the names of the men of talent who do honor to my reign." And while saying these words, he turned toward Colbert. The latter felt himself crushed, the sweat flowed from his brow, no word presented itself to his lips, he suffered an inexpressible martyrdom. "You will recollect that name," added Louis XIV.

Colbert bowed, but was paler than his ruffles of Flemish lace. Fouquet continued:

"The masonries are of Roman mastic; the architects have composed it for me after the best accounts of antiquity."

"And the cannons?" asked Louis.

"Oh, sire! that concerns your majesty; it did not become me to place cannon in my own house, unless your majesty had told me it was yours."

Louis began to float, undetermined between the hatred which this so powerful man inspired him with and the pity he felt for that other man, so cast down, who seemed to him the counterfeit of the former. But the consciousness of his kingly duty prevailed over the feelings of the man, and he stretched out his finger to the paper.

"It must have cost you a great deal of money to carry these plans into execution," said he.

"I believe I had the honor of telling your majesty the amount?"

"Repeat it, if you please; I have forgotten it."

"Sixteen hundred thousand livres."

"Sixteen hundred thousand livres; you are enormously rich, monsieur."

"It is your majesty who is rich, since Belle-Isle is yours."

"Yes, thank you; but however rich I may be, Monsieur Fouquet——" The king stopped.

"Well, sire?" asked the surintendant.

"I foresee the moment when I shall want money."

"You, sire? And at what moment, then?"

"To-morrow, for example."

"Will your majesty do me the honor to explain yourself?"

"My brother is going to marry the princess of England."

"Well, sire?"

"Well, I ought to give the young princess a reception worthy of the granddaughter of Henry IV."

"That is but just, sire."

"Then I shall want money."

"No doubt."

"I shall want——" Louis hesitated. The sum he was going to demand was the same that he had been obliged to refuse Charles II. He turned toward Colbert, that he might give the blow.

"I shall want to-morrow——" repeated he, looking at Colbert.

"A million," said the latter bluntly, delighted to take his revenge. Fouquet turned his back upon the intendant to listen to the king. He did not at all turn round, but waited till the king repeated, or rather murmured, "a million."

"Oh, sire!" replied Fouquet disdainfully, "a million! What will your majesty do with a million?"

"It appears to me, nevertheless——" said Louis XIV.

"That is not more than is spent at the nuptials of one of the most petty princes of Germany."

"Monsieur!"

"Your majesty must have two millions at least. The horses alone would run away with five hundred thousand livres. I shall have the honor of sending your majesty sixteen hundred thousand livres this evening."

"How," said the king, "sixteen hundred thousand livres?"

"Look, sire," replied Fouquet, without even turning toward Colbert, "I know that that wants four hundred thousand livres of the two millions. But this Monsieur l'Intendant"—pointing over his shoulder to Colbert, who, if possible, became paler, behind him—"has in his coffers nine hundred thousand livres of mine."

The king turned round to look at Colbert.

"But——" said the latter.

"Monsieur," continued Fouquet, still speaking indirectly to Colbert, "monsieur has received, a week ago, sixteen hundred thousand livres; he has paid a hundred thousand livres to the guards, sixty-four thousand livres to the hospitals, twenty-five thousand to the Swiss, a hundred and thirty thousand for provisions, a thousand for arms, ten thousand for incidental expenses; I do not err, then, in reckoning upon nine hundred thousand livres that are left."

Then turning toward Colbert, like a disdainful head of office toward his inferior, "Take care, monsieur," said he, "that those nine hundred thousand livres be remitted to his majesty this evening, in gold."

"But," said the king, "that will make two millions five hundred thousand livres."

"Sire, the five hundred thousand livres over may serve as pocket money for his royal highness. You understand, Monsieur Colbert, this evening before eight o'clock."

And with these words, bowing respectfully to the king, the surintendant made his exit backward, without honoring with a single look the envious man whose head he had just half shaved.

Colbert tore his ruffles to pieces in his rage, and bit his lips till they bled.

Fouquet had not passed the door of the cabinet, when an usher, pushing by him, exclaimed: "A courier from Bretagne for his majesty."

"Monsieur d'Herblay was right," murmured Fouquet, pulling out his watch; "an hour and fifty-five minutes. It was quite true!"